

**THE STUDY OF  
THEMES AND EXPRESSIONS IN THE  
POETRY OF H.M.L. LENTSOANE**

by

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**DECLARATION**

I declare that **THE STUDY OF THEMES AND EXPRESSIONS IN THE POETRY OF H.M.L. LENTSOANE** is my own work and that all the sources that I used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

  
1992.06.10



## FOREWORD

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*Ngwatomosadi, wena wa segodi seramagana,  
 Sepekwa setšea hubela kgahlantšhong ya dingope,  
 Nageng ya Sebopa sa ditšhukudu  
 gaboKotse gaboGafela,  
 Ke tšhaba mediti.*



## SUMMARY

In this dissertation theme and expression are examined. It comprises six chapters.

Chapter I, the introduction, outlines aim of study, and explains "theme" and "expression". It focuses on the influences of the biography and milieu of H.M.L. Lentsoane and his contributions to the development of Northern Sotho poetry. Chapter II examines themes on love and family life. Its focus is marital status, the importance of a child in the family, and divorce. Chapter III, themes on women, concentrates on black beauty, responsibilities of modern African women, their strife for parity with men, and misbehaviour. Chapter IV examines social problems: evils of money, juvenile delinquency, abuse of intoxicating drinks and child-sex. Chapter V covers protest themes: influx control, removals and their evil consequences, and the equality of all people before God.

The General Conclusion, Chapter VI, summarises our observations and recommendations with reference to Lentsoane's poetry.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Aim of Study

The aim of this study (dissertation) is to examine theme and its expression in the poetry of H.M.L. Lentsoane, and to evaluate his poetic contribution towards the total development of modern Northern Sotho poetry. We will also show how his personal experiences have had an influence on the nature of his poetry.

Lentsoane has written on a number of themes in his attempt to re-live his experiences in his poetry. We will deal with the following themes (vide the ensuing Scope and Composition of Chapters in this dissertation) in details:

- a. Themes on Love and Family Life;
- b. Themes on Women;
- c. Themes on Social Problems; and
- d. Themes on Protest.

In our discussion of the themes, reference will be made to the following poetic works of H.M.L. Lentsoane:

*Direto tša Mang le Mang* (Poems for Everyone) (1971)

<i>Ga se ya lešaka le</i> (It is not of this kraal)	(1973)
<i>Mokgako</i> (A New Claypot)	(1975)
<i>Ihlo la Moreti</i> (The Eye of the Poet)	(1981)
<i>Kgogamašego</i> (The Evening Star)	(1988)

The above publications clearly indicate that Lentsoane is one of the most prolific poets in Northern Sotho from whom we still expect much. The fact that none of his poems and poetic works has ever obtained a prize does not underrate him as a poet of note. His poetry is indeed qualitative as seen in one of his poems that enjoyed popularity, especially among high school students of his time, when it was published in the journal, TŠWELOPELE (refer to his ensuing biography) and, further, by the fact that some of his poetic works were prescribed, viz. *Direto tša Mang le Mang*, *Ga se ya lešaka le* and *Mokgako* at post-primary school and tertiary levels in the 1970's and 1980's.

This examination of theme and expression in the poetry of Lentsoane is ascribed to two major factors. There is a particular need for an overview of the commendable output of Lentsoane. This is done in an attempt to complete the critical reviews of some scholars on his poetic works.

### 1.1 The Meaning of the Concepts: Theme and Expression

In an attempt to elucidate the meaning of the concepts: "theme" and "expression", we will refer to a number of scholars.

M.H. Abrams (1981:111) defines theme as:

... the term more usefully applied to an abstract claim, or doctrine, whether implicit or asserted, which an imaginative work is designed to incorporate and make persuasive to the reader.

C. Brooks and R.P. Warren (1976:268) concur with B.B. Cohen (1973:198) who defines theme as:

The essential meaning or main concept in a literary work.

Scott (1965:291) states

(Theme is) The subject on which one speaks, the term is more often used to indicate its central idea.

Shaw (1976:273) states that theme is:

- a. The central and dominating idea in a literary work.
- b. the message or moral implicit in any work of art ...

Shipley (1970:333) states

(Theme is) The subject of discourse, the underlying action or



movement, or the general topic, of which the particular story is an illustration.

Although we have to guard against over-simplifying the meaning of the concept "theme" in our explanation, we deduce the following essential elements about theme from definitions of the above-mentioned scholars:

An artist should give the underlying idea in a piece of art about a particular sphere of life to the audience or readers in several ways.

An attempt towards a comprehensive explanation of the meaning of the concept "theme" as indicated above presupposes that there must always be an artist (initiator), e.g. a sculptor, a writer, etc. who transmits a(n) main or underlying idea, e.g. political, social, economic, psychological, moral and spiritual, or any combination of these to the audience or spectators, e.g. the reader, listener, etc. in several ways, e.g. through the repetition of the title of the work, clues or directly as admonition or subtly as a suggestion, etc. Cohen (1973:205-206). In short, for the sake of a clear understanding of the meaning of the concept, "theme", the first definition of Shaw above is appropriate to our discussion.

The concept "expression" embraces the language and the style in which the author unfolds and elucidates theme in his presentation. "Language" refers to the author's choice of appropriate words, sentences, and other linguistic expressions (Msimang, 1983:177). As regards "style" (mode of expression), we learn from Murry (1922:8) that there are various approaches to the problem of style, such as the philosophic approach which emphasises

logic, the linguistic approach which stresses phono-grammatics, and the transformational-generative mode (i.e. the prose style which emphasises appropriate choice of words). Apart from its variety of approaches, the concept of style is, further, compounded by the fact that it (style) lies astride the boundary between linguistics and literary criticism (Makgamatha, 1987:150).

We shall confine ourselves to definitions of two scholars in elucidating the distinction between expression (language) and mode of expression (style). Murry (1922:8) defines style thus:

Style, as personal idiosyncrasy, style as technique of exposition;  
style as the highest achievement of literature.

Stylistics focuses on the personal idiosyncrasy of expression, i.e. the peculiar and individualistic manner in which the storyteller (author) organises his thoughts in such a way that his story-telling (writing) is readily identifiable. Consequently style lends originality to the tale (piece of writing), with the result that each story-teller (author) has his own peculiar manner of saying what he wants to communicate (theme) - his personal idiosyncrasy - which he then fleshes out with his own language choice, i.e. words, sentences and other language expressions (Makgamatha, 1987:150).

Stylistics has developed along two different lines. According to Ullman (1966:100), one school of thought focuses on the stylistic resources of a particular language, i.e. on the expressive (poetic) devices which the language places at the disposal of the speaker and

the writer, and the other focuses on the use to which these stylistic resources are put in the hands of creative artists (Makgamatha, 1987:151). This brings Ullman (1966:100) to the conclusion that

We shall therefore have to distinguish between two main types of stylistic study: those which explore style of a language (expression) and those which are focused on the style (mode of expression) of a writer.

For the purpose of this dissertation, we reach the conclusion with special reference to Ullman's definition which distinguishes between expression (language), i.e. the use of proverbs, idioms, maxims, etc. and the mode of expression (the style) of the writer, i.e. the use of repetition or refrain, inversion of word-order, linking, etc. The said distinctions on "expression" are only for the sake of convenience. They should not be viewed as watertight compartments. However, the use of the concept "expression" throughout the dissertation should be understood to cover both the language and the style as the means through which the poet elucidates theme.

## 1.2 Lentsoane's Mode of Expression in his Poetry

We have found it inevitable for us to lucidly discuss the concept "expression" (i.e. language) in the poetry of Lentsoane without making reference to his "mode of expression" (style) (Vide sub-heading 1.1 **The Meaning of the Concepts: Theme and Expression** for a clear distinction between "expression" and "mode of expression").

Although some poets may imitate others in their use of expression, each poet is distinguished from another through his unique way of expression that is peculiar to him. The same applies to the expression of Lentsoane.

Expressions in the form of figures of speech, proverbs, idioms, etc. are usually employed in building up theme. Expressions are, therefore, more related to the style (mode of expression) of the poet. Theme and expression are complementary to each other in the sense that they facilitate the understanding of a particular poem (Mashabela, 1979:4).

Lentsoane has employed expressive language in his poetry. The mode of expression of the poet can be divided into two categories in terms of origin, viz. 1. Expressions that are inherent in the language, and 2. The use of some poetic devices as an influence of other literary works.

Now follows a detailed exposition on how the poet has employed his mode of expression in his poetry so that when we identify a particular expression that he has used in elucidating a particular theme, we should be knowing exactly what we are referring to.

#### **1.2.1 Expressions that are Inherent in the Language**

Lentsoane is skilful in the use of expressions that are inherent in the language (his vernacular) as a result of the influence of his rural milieu in which he was born and lived partially, that of the oral traditions he learned from his grandmother, and that of the language and culture in which he was immersed. Such expressions include the use of

proverbs, idioms, maxims, archaic words, compound nouns in the form of self-coined words, etc.

We have extracted relevant examples from the poetry of Lentsoane to illustrate how the poet has employed each poetic skill or technique:

The poet uses proverbs. Hornby, A.S. *et al* (1974:673) explain a proverb as a "popular short saying, with words of advice or warning". As regards their form, some proverbs are used either in their long or short form. This becomes evident in both extracts below:

In lines 7-9 of the verse "*Bja gago bošwaanyana*" (Your light complexion), the poet has employed a proverb in its expansiveness thus:

*O di bone botala Moswana*  
*Ge a re botse re llela boswana,*  
*Bošwaanyana bo a lahla. (1988:9)*

He has long realised the Black one  
When he says beauty is black,  
Whiteness leads astray.

and in line 6 of the second stanza of "*Se ntelele Mahlako*" (Don't bother about me, Mahlako), the poet has ably employed this long proverb in the short form thus:

*Le holofele leraga Mahlako,*  
Stick to the mud, Mahlako,

which in its original form reads thus:

*Hlapi holofela leraga, meetse a pšhele o a bona.*

Fish stick to the mud, water dried up while you were watching.

Be it a long or a short form of a proverb, Lentsoane has efficiently used either form of a proverb in its context in order to express his feelings effectively.

Another expressive skill that Lentsoane has used in his poetry is an idiom. Guma S.M. (1967:66) explains idioms as "characteristic indigenous expressions, whose meanings cannot be ordinarily deduced or inferred from a knowledge of individual words that make up them. They are native to a language, and have the stylistic effect of giving it a typical native ring that is characteristic of its mode of expression". Idioms such as these abound in the poetry of Lentsoane:

In lines 43 & 44 of the verse "*La gago Lerato*" (Your Love), the poet implicitly expresses contentment or joy with regard to love-making in these idioms:

*Ke thobe kgobe ka mootlwa,*  
*Ke itie mpa ka lenono. (1981:17)*

I should be complacent,

I should satisfy my desires.

Lentsoane uses idioms in different ways. For example, both idioms in these consecutive lines in the same poem are synonymous and intended to effect emphasis, thus enhance the art of expression in his poetry. This synonymous mode of expression is not platitudinous in modern poetry, it is an acceptable relic that is derived from traditional poetry.

Lentsoane does not overlook the use of maxims that also enhance his art of expression in his poetry. An example of such maxims is cited in lines 3 & 4 of the 5th stanza of "*Meaparo ya kgarebe tša sefsa*" (The Mode of Dress of Modern Ladies) when the poet states that ladies of today dress to kill:

*Nke e phelela go apara*

*Ga e aparele go phela.* (1975:38)

It is as though they live to dress

They do not dress to live.

This maxim has been aptly used to reveal that the poet is aware that ladies dress elegantly.



It might be a useful idea to consider how Lentsoane uses words in his poetry. He uses words of different kinds such as these: archaic words, compound words, neologisms, etc. We will cite a few examples to substantiate our stand.

Some archaic words appear in line 3 of the 6th stanza of the poem "*Tšhelete*" (Money).

*Go rethwa **diphaka** le matswele,*  
*Go emaema mefaka e mešoro, (1971:27).*

Biceps and fists strike,  
Dangerous knives go up and down,

and in lines 4 & 5 of the 7th stanza of the same poem:

*Ya **lohlanya** bana ba setsiba,*  
*Ya **lohlanya** kgoši le masogana, (1971:28)*

It causes siblings to fight,  
It causes the chief and young men to fight,

Instead of their acceptable standardised Northern Sotho terms "*difaka*" (biceps) and "*lwešanya*" (cause to fight), the poet has employed their archaic forms "*diphaka*" (biceps) and "*lohlanya*" (cause to fight) in both lines.



Compound words abound in the poetry of Lentsoane. These compounds appear in the form of self-coined words such as those underlined in the verse "*Di kgone*" (Go on):

*Bo golela **bokgalekedibona*** (line 19)

It (i.e. difficulty) grows for  
I-am-experienced and company.

*Ke tšona tša **kearatwa***, (line 65)

They (i.e. fruits) are those of  
I-am-being-loved,

*Wa ya wa hwetša **badulankgong*** (line 83) (1988:23-25)

You will go and be with stayers-  
in-the-big-claypot (i.e. the dead),

The poet has also employed loanwords only where his vernacular does not have an appropriate term of reference to a particular concept. His loanwords are mostly of either English or Afrikaans origin such as these:

*Bophelo ke bo bone dikanapeng tša  
**bommisisi**, (*Mophamoladikanapa*, 1975:32) (line 11)*

I saw life in the bags of **missuses**,

*Moo go fofago dipaesekele,* (line 6)

*Bangwe ba bolailwe ke dithai,* (line 9)

(Bahlatswa-diaparo, 1975:36)

Where **bicycles** are flying,

Others have their **ties** on,

The use of these loanwords indicates that neologisms is one of the communicative techniques of the poet. What is commendable with Lentsoane is that one cannot discern the influence of Southern Sotho and Setswana from his poems. To such linguistic influences in which he was submerged, many of us who lack backbones could have easily and carelessly succumbed. The poet is, therefore, regarded as one of Northern Sotho language purists and conservative traditionalists. One has to say "bravo!" to the poet for such resistance which he kept up until he is re-integrated among the native speakers of Northern Sotho at Lebowakgomo township today.

#### 1.2.2 The Use of some Poetic Devices as an Influence of other Literary Works

The ability that Lentsoane has as regards the use of some poetic devices results from his readership of other literary sources. Such poetic devices include figures of speech, imagery, inversion of word-order, repetition (refrain), linking, etc.

Figures of speech are some of the poetic devices that Lentsoane has employed intensively and extensively in his poetry. Hornby *et al* (1974:323) explain a figure of speech as an

"expression ... that gives variety or force in using words out of their literal meaning".  
Kinds of figures of speech are simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, metonymy, irony, sarcasm, rhetorical question, paradox, onomatopoeia, etc. The following extracts are examples of figures of speech that Lentsoane has employed in his poetry.

A simile is used in lines 2-4 of the first stanza of "*Mehla ya Marumo*" (Times of War):

*Ditlhodi ga se ditlhodi*  
*Di tsokame maswikeng bokaditšhwene,*  
*Di rokame bokadipela,*  
*Ditsebe di tlorotšwe eka bommutla (1971:15).*

Sentinels are not sentinels  
They have perched on rocks like baboons,  
They have perched like rock-rabbits,  
Ears are pricked as if they were hares.

A simile is some form of comparison that is characterised by the use of these words: "... boka..." (... like ...) and "... eka ..." (... like/as if ...) in lines 3-4 of the excerpt above.

In line 9 of the second stanza of the same poem, the poet has employed a metaphor thus:

*Mosamelo wa monna ke kotse, (1971:15)*  
The pillow of a man is a shield,

A metaphor is another form of comparison in a statement that is characterised by the use of the word: "... ke ..." ( ...is...). A metaphor is discernible in a statement where two things that share the same features are compared, although they are not identical. For example, "*mosamelo*" (pillow) and "*kotse*" (shield) share a common feature in this context, i.e. a man's head rests on either during sleep depending on circumstances during a particular point in time. During times of peace, a man sleeps with his head resting on a pillow while during war or turmoil, it rests on armaments.

The poet has employed two more figures of speech in lines 2 & 3 of the third stanza thus:

*Naga ke sekobo sa mafelelo,*  
*Ga ya befa e ntšhitše ka ga tšhwene,*  
*E šošobantše sefahlego (1971:16).*

The land is ugly in an exceptional way,  
It is more hideous than the baboon,  
It has a wrinkled face.

The figures of speech that are cited in lines 2 & 3 of the excerpt are examples of hyperbole and personification respectively. In a hyperbolic expression there is exaggeration in a statement whereas in personification, the object in the statement is implied to perceive through one or more senses as if it is animate like man or behaves like man usually does.

Metonymy is a figure of speech that is contained in line 1 of the last stanza of "*Bophelo*" (Life) thus:

*E a ela noka-kgolo Bophelo, (1975:2)*

It is flowing big-river Life,

In metonymy, one thing in a statement substitutes another one with which it is closely associated. For instance, in the line cited above, "*noka-kgolo*" (big-river substitutes water that flows in it.

Irony is a figure of speech that Lentsoane employs in his poetry. An example of irony is discernible in line 4 of the verse "*Mophamoladikanapa*" (Bag-snatcher) as the poet states:

*Le šišintše hlogo tša phatla tša mašošo, (1975:32)*

You shook heads with wrinkled faces,

In an ironic expression, the poet uses sharp criticism such as the bag-snatcher levelled against bureaucratic White authorities who refuse to grant permits to job-seekers at labour bureau offices. In contrast to irony, there is another figure of speech that is more or less related to it that is called sarcasm. An example of sarcasm appears in lines 18-20 of the verse "*Ge o swana le nna o ilalo!*" (Bah! you resemble me) when he says:

*Go šupanwa ka menwana,*

*Go lootšwa mefaka,*

*Go swana o itshwanela le nna. (1981:14)*

Fingers are being pointed at one another,

Knives are being sharpened,

Though indeed you resemble me.

In the last line of this excerpt, the poet has employed sarcasm in his attempt to reveal that he fails to understand why men fight over a woman with so many shortcomings.

The fact that the poet compares this woman with himself renders this figure of speech a blunt criticism, and therefore qualifies to be called sarcasm. In short, irony and sarcasm are opposites of each other. Irony conveys a sharp criticism in a statement whereas sarcasm is a blunt criticism.

Another figure of speech that abounds in the poetry of Lentsoane is a rhetorical question. Examples of a rhetorical question appear in lines 1 & 2 of the verse "*Tshipi o llang gabohloko?*" (Knell, why are you tolling so bitterly?) when he says:

*Tshipi o llang gabohloko?*

*O reng o re dikiša?*

Knell, for what are you tolling so bitterly?

Why do you join us in our mourning?

Questions of this nature do not need an answer and are characterised by a question mark at the end of each line in order to effect emphasis on a particular point like death as in the cited line.

A paradox is also a figure of speech. Lentsoane has rarely used this expression in his poetry. A relevant example of a paradox appears in line 6 of the narrative poem "*Ga se ya lešaka le*" (It does not belong to this kraal) thus:

*Ke a tseba gore o tate ga o tate. (1973:29)*

I know that **you are my father, you are not my father.**

A paradoxical expression comprises two contradictory statements that refer to the same thing. The first statement usually appears in the affirmative form whereas the second one stands in a negative form such as those that are underlined above.

Lentsoane has also used climax as a figure of speech. Hornby *et al* (1974:156) explain climax as an "event or point of greatest interest or intensity" in a piece of writing. An example of climax in the poetry of Lentsoane appears in lines 39-44 of the verse "*La gago lerato*" (Your love) thus:

*Moswana o be a di bone botala,*

*Ge a re pitšana ya maano ga e apee gabedi.*

*Kgale ke be ke e thelega,*

*Ke e faga, ke e buduše,*

*Ke thobe kgobe ka mootlwa,  
Ke itie mpa ka lenono. (1981:17)*

The Black one had long experienced enough,  
When he said once beaten twice shy.  
Long ago I used to put it on the fire,  
Add mealie-meal and stir, until it is done,  
Then I would relax,  
And then enjoy my satisfaction.

In a climax, as one infers from the extract above, a series of actions gain momentum step by step to its highest point (a crisis).

Onomatopoeia is a figure of speech that Lentsoane uses in his poetry. Through the use of onomatopoeic words, the poet presents sounds, feelings, actions, etc. as he perceives them in real life-situations. They are characterised by either a very high or very low tone when articulated and take on exclamation marks at the end of each line. Their use is a graphic representation of real sense-impressions that the poet has experienced. The relevant examples of onomatopoeic words appear in lines 4-9 of the third stanza of "*Selemo*" (Summer) as follows:

*Temong go a kikirisanwa,  
Sefepi ke tloo...o!  
Melodi ke tswio! tswio! tswio!*



*Leotwana ke tsitsiri! tsitsiri!*

*Mobu ke hwaa...a!*

*Mootledi ke "kom! kom! kom!" (1971:49-50).*

In the ploughing-fields there is a struggle,

A whip is cracking!

Whistles are blowing! blowing! blowing!

A wheel is squeaking! squeaking!

Soil is whirring!

The driver of the span is "come! come! come!".

The onomatopoeic words in the end of the lines that are cited above express a variety of sounds while in the last line they express the turning action of the span of draught-animals. Onomatopoeic words are a communicative technique that is intended to express some sense-impressions accurately and concisely.

Another communicative technique that merits attention in the poetry of Lentsoane is imagery. Kreuzer and Cogan (1966:298) say this about imagery:

All people, no matter how much they differ in surroundings, in history, in personality, in beliefs discover and continue to experience the world around them through their senses. They all see, hear, touch, taste and smell the world. Therefore, one extremely effective means of verbal communication is to evoke or

create imagined sense impressions. These sense impressions are images, images in general are referred to as imagery.

Stone and Bell (1967:115) give a lucid explanation of the nature of imagery as follows:

Images communicate the sound, tastes, smells, sights, colours and tactile feelings of life. Images are not just figures of speech, though they usually appear in this form, they are all those means whereby sensory experience is conveyed in language.

Serudu (1987:217) briefly states that there are different kinds of images, viz. the visual, auditory, tactile, the olfactory, the gustatory and the kinesthetic. The following are examples of each kind of image cited above.

An example of visual images that the poet has employed appears in the last 2 lines of the verse "*Bahlatswa-diaparo*" (Washer-women) when he states:

*Gobane matsogong a lena go tšwele dinaledi,  
Go sa tla tšwa mahlasedi. (1975:36).*

Because from your hands emerged stars,  
There will still emerge sun-beams.

The poet employs visual images through the use of celestial bodies. Through these visual sense-impressions, the poet evokes feelings of true leadership that will emerge through the support of these down-trodden women.

Examples of auditory images that the poet has employed appear in lines 5-6 & 9 of the 8th stanza of the poem "*Mehla ya marumo*" (During Times of War) where he depicts the scene of blood-bath between Babinatau and Babinatšhwene clans as follows:

*Sa magagana ke nge! nge!*

*Motho a re fase šihla!*

*Tulamoši ya morala ke phobe! phobe!* (1971:17)

With a tomahawk it is chop! chop!

A person falls down with a thud

A knob-kierie from the kitchen is wallop! wallop!

The sounds that emerge from the use of traditional African weapons of war evoke sense-impressions that determine the holocaust. Such auditory impressions arise from the use of onomatopoeic words: "*nge! nge!*" (chop! chop!), "*šihla*" (to fall with a thud) and "*phobe! phobe!*" (wallop! wallop!), thus the poet has successfully used auditory images.

The use of an olfactory image is apparent in the last line of the excerpt below (lines 7-9 of the 9th stanza) from the poem "*Mehla ya Marumo*" (During Times of War) when the poet depicts vultures - birds of prey - that have to dispose of the corpses as follows:

*A fofafofa manong,*  
*A bone mokhora fase,*  
*A bitšwa ke mosw'a nama. (1971:17)*

They are flying about the vultures,  
They have seen abundant food down,  
They are beckoned by the stench of flesh.

The term "*mosw'a nama*" (the stench of flesh) evokes an olfactory impression through which decomposed corpses invite the vultures. The poet has used this olfactory image effectively.

Another kind of image that the poet has used is a tactile image. Examples of tactile images are apparent in lines 9 & 10 of the second stanza of the poem "*Lehufa*" (Jealousy) where the poet says:

*Ke sešo sa bophelo,*  
*Se hlohlona se eya pele. (1975:28)*

It is an inflammation of life,  
It itches while it becomes septic.

Through the use of the metaphor in "*Ke sešo sa bophelo*" (It is an inflammation of life), the poet employs a tactile image which evokes a sense-impression of spontaneous

spreading typical of jealousy. Jealousy and disease share a common feature: infectiousness.

The use of gustatory images is also apparent in lines 14-16 of the verse "*Kgotla o mone*" (Dip and Taste) when the poet says:

*Kgotla o mone o sa monele ruri,*  
*Todi ye e na le beng ba yona,*  
*Todi ye e na le nako ya yona.* (1988:28)

Dip and taste with reservations,  
This honey has its owners,  
This honey has its own time.

The poet uses symbolism in the extract above. It is through analogy that we understand that the poet compares honey with love-making. Honey and love-making share a common characteristic: sweetness and sensation respectively. Apart from sweetness and sensation, one uses a finger in tasting honey which is also analogous to one's use of an erect penis in love-making. The poet, therefore, uses the gustatory image effectively. The poet has also employed a kinesthetic image in line 2 of the first stanza of the poem "*Moeng-mofsa wa Batho*" (The New Arrival) when he says:

*Go tonya too!*  
It is ice-cold!

Through the use of the onomatopoeic word: "too!" (ice-cold), the poet has emphasised the low temperature to which the neonate is exposed. This onomatopoeic word evokes a sense-impression of temperature, it is thus a kinesthetic image.

Imagery in a piece of writing may be evoked through the use of figures of speech. Although some writers like D.B.Z. Ntuli (1984:15) follow Heese and Lawton's suggestion and consider only simile, metaphor, personification and symbolism under imagery, we propose that all figures of speech evoke imagery. Imagery may, therefore, range from purely denotative descriptions to highly figurative ones. Imagery is a more meaningful technique of communication although it may lend obscurity of meaning to young and non-native speakers of a particular language.

Another communicative technique that Lentsoane employs in his poetry is inversion of word-order in a sentence. Relevant examples of distorted sequence of words appear in lines 83-86 of the verse "*Therešo ke efe?*" (Which is the Truth?) when the poet says:

*Dihlong ke tšeo re tla tsogago le tšona,*  
*Dihlong ke tšeo re tla hlwago le tšona,*  
*Dihlong ke tšeo di tla itišago le rena,*  
*Dihlong ke tšeo di tla robalago le rena.* (1988:55)

Shame is what we shall rise with,  
Shame is what we shall while away the days with,  
Shame is what we shall while away the nights with,

Shame is what we shall sleep with.

Such constructions are usually avoided in colloquial speech. They are expressions that are employed to lay emphasis on whatever the poet wishes to drive home to his reader.

Repetition is an expressive technique that Lentsoane employs. He employs repetition of a single word, a word-group (phrase) and a whole sentence in an attempt to elucidate a particular theme in his poetry. Appropriate extracts of examples in which the poet has used repetition are cited below.

Word-repetition is evident in lines 1-4 of the verse "*Palamonwana*" (A Wedding/an Engagement Ring) where the poet asserts:

*Ke lehuto la gauta le taamane,*

*Lehuto la mabaibai,*

*Lehuto la go bitša,*

*Lehuto la go tia.*

It is a knot of gold and diamond,

A knot of splendour,

A knot of expenses,

A knot of firmness.

The repetition of the word "*lehuto*" (knot) in the quoted lines serves to emphasise the binding force of a wedding or an engagement ring between married partners.

Repetition of a word-group is also discernible in the ending couplet of the same poem that is reflected above:

*E kgolo palamonwana ke pelo,*

*E kgolo palamonwana ke leswalo. (1975:44)*

The important wedding ring is the heart,

The important wedding ring is the conscience.

In this repetition of the word-group, the poet lays emphasis on the fact that honesty which is the best policy by far outclasses any other form of capital adornment in cementing matrimonial relationships between spouses.

The poet also uses repetition of a sentence in the form of a "leitmotif" (i.e. the guiding motif). The same sentence that has been employed repeatedly throughout the poem is usually the title of the poem in which the poet elucidates its theme. The appropriate example of the repetition of a sentence which is the title of the poem is evident in the verse "*Ge nkabe ke di tseba*" (If I were knowledgeable with them - i.e. magical charms) appears four times through its body. Through the repetition of this title or sentence, the poet emphasises the theme that he wishes he had magical powers to defend himself against all the odds of this world in his attempt to transform the earth into a favourable



habitat for himself.

The poet employs linking which is peculiar to traditional literature in Northern Sotho as a communicative technique in his poetry. Linking may be either oblique or vertical or horizontal in the lines of a poem. The use of linking in poetry is intended to effect emphasis in an attempt to amplify theme. Relevant examples of linking from the poetry of Lentsoane are cited in the excerpt below:

In lines 1 & 2 of the 5th stanza of the poem "*Morwalo*"( Burden), the poet has employed linking:

*Go imelwa ke a imelwa,*  
*Ke imelwa ke thopa ya bophelo. (1988:6)*

To be burdened I am burdened,  
I am burdened by the secret (foetus) of life.

With the repetition of the term "*imelwa*" (burdened) in the passage above, the poet employs horizontal linking in the first line, vertical linking in the first and second lines (the same terms "*imelwa*" (burdened) one on top of another), and finally oblique linking with the use of the same term in conjoining the first and the second lines. All these forms of linking are intended to effect emphasis and accelerate rhythm in an attempt to amplify the theme that women usually conceive problematic or burdensome children.

We reach the conclusion that Lentsoane refines his mode of expression through the influence of his academic career in Northern Sotho which is one of his major subjects at university level, particularly his readership of the poetry and novels of O.K. Matsepe who was a prolific writer. Through his expressive language, the poet elucidates themes in his poetry.

### 1.3 Studies on the Poetry of Lentsoane

As one of the modern poets in Northern Sotho, Lentsoane has long caught the sight of certain scholars who have already presented some critical reviews on his poetry. Such studies are intended to give publicity to his writings and may perhaps shed light on some topics/themes that he re-creates in his poetry. Perhaps we need to examine the illuminating contributions of these scholars on his poetry.

S.M. Serudu (1981:95-104), in **LIMI vol. 9 nos 1 & 2 - A Bulletin of the Department of African Languages** at the University of South Africa, has presented a critical review entitled: **A New Trend in Northern Sotho Poetry, with special reference to H.M.L. Lentsoane's Mokgako**. In this work, Serudu has pointed out that:

Lentsoane has therefore lifted Northern Sotho poetry from its subjective nature to the most objective.

In support to the statement above, for example, Lentsoane re-creates some of his experiences that appertain to these topics/themes: the lot of washer-women in cities as

breadwinners, unemployment as a source of theft and manslaughter, influx control measures and their consequences such as bag-snatchers and informers who attempt to make a livelihood, the spirit of Black beauty among Black women and its subsequent problems such as illegal squatting, forced removals and re-settlement. Serudu indicates that the poet is not a pioneer in this objective approach to modern Northern Sotho poetry. He follows closely in the tracks of P.M. Mamogobo in *Leduleputswa*. (The Grey-beard) (1953).

C.K. Nchabeleng (1976:5-11), in **LIMI Vol. 4 - A Bulletin of the Department of African Languages**, gives a critical analysis of characterisation, setting and modes of expression (style) of Lentsoane and Matome-Fela in their narrative poems *Ga se ya lešaka le* and *Sebilwane* respectively. He also shows many similarities in both works. In his conclusion to this critical review, Nchabeleng (1976:11) states:

The comparisons which have been drawn are general and aimed at revealing the similarities between the works of the two writers. It is however difficult to state categorically that Lentsoane has been influenced by Matome-Fela, but an observant reader will no doubt agree that Lentsoane - perhaps after reading *Sebilwane* - was inspired to write *Ga se ya lešaka le*. Great writers are always a source of inspiration to the younger writers.

P.H.D. Mashabela (1979:278-280), in his M.A. dissertation entitled: *Themes and Expression in Matsepe's Poetry*, illustrates the influence of the writings of O.K. Matsepe

to his younger writer. The style of Matsepe that Lentsoane has adopted covers his objective approach, mode of expression and to some extent theme or subject matter in his (Lentsoane's) poetry.

S.M. Mampa (1987), in his conceptual article for Hons B.A. entitled: *A Critical Appreciation of H.M.L. Lentsoane's Poetry in Mokgako*, critically analyses some poems that pertain to these topics: Nature, Abstract Concepts, Concrete objects, Man and his world, Social Problems, Urbanisation and finally, religion.

The contributions of the said scholars reveal that Lentsoane is an observant poet whose themes cover significant events and even those that might have escaped the attention of other people as insignificant.

The ensuing comprehensive biography of Lentsoane is intended to provide the readers with his background information in an attempt to elucidate theme and related expression in his poetic works.

#### **1.4 The Biography of H.M.L. Lentsoane**

Herbert Mokadi Lucky Lentsoane is the first son of Mr Thomas Cheleoane and Mrs Mina Masegadike Lentsoane. He was born on 27 November 1946 at gaMarishane village in the Nebo district of Lebowa in the Republic of South Africa. H.M.L. Lentsoane started school in 1953 at Marishane Community School where he passed Std I in 1955. At the beginning of 1956 his parents left for Johannesburg where they settled at Orlando

West Extension. Here he was debarred from proceeding with Std. II because school authorities felt he was still very young. Apart from repeating Std. I, he also faced problems of attending lessons that were taught through the media of Southern Sotho and Setswana as Northern Sotho was not offered. He attended the following schools respectively: Tlhoreng, Thulasizwe and Belle. In 1958 the family returned to gaMarishane where H.M.L. Lentsoane proceeded with primary education from Std. III and passed Std. VI in 1961. He also had to face problems of transition from Southern Sotho and Setswana media back to Northern Sotho which he mastered after a short period. He also gathered profound experience about wild-life as a shepherd and a herdboys.

H.M.L. Lentsoane continued his education at Bopedi-Bapedi Secondary School which is situated at gaMarishane from 1962 to 1964 where he passed Junior Certificate. Here he developed the love for Northern Sotho.

He competed with his fellow-students on written essays, the best of which were sent to students' journal, WAMBA, which was commonly known as *Motswalle wa Bana* (Children's Companion). By then he and his colleagues also read another journal entitled "*Tšwelopele*" (Progress) intensively.

The love for poetry of H.M.L. Lentsoane began to show while he was still a student at Bopedi-Bapedi school through the influence of his grand-mother Elsina Makuntane Makgoba, who used to recite praise-poems of Marishane Community to him at the hearth in the evenings. He wrote down some of her recitations for preservation for posterity.

He then started composing his poems with *Sekolo se se phagamego sa Bopedi-Bapedi* (Bopedi-Bapedi High School) which was published in the journal "*Tšwelopele*" (Progress) which made him popular and many people encouraged him to compose a few more poems.

In 1965 H.M.L. Lentsoane returned to Johannesburg where he stayed in Diepkloof township. He passed his matriculation at Orlando High School in 1966. With the aid of his Northern Sotho teacher, viz. Mr Bernard Mahulo Molaba, who introduced to him the art of poetry, Lentsoane then composed a few more poems.

H.M.L. Lentsoane could not continue with his education due to financial problems during the year, 1967. His parents dissuaded him from seeking work with the fear that he might not carry on with his education because of love for money.

With the aid of Anglo-American Bursary Fund, H.M.L. Lentsoane enrolled for a B.A. degree as a full-time student at the University of the North in 1968. He proceeded with the composition of poems enthusiastically with the result that he published his first collection of poems with the title: *Direto tša Mang le Mang* in 1971 when he was busy with U.E.D. (Non-Graduate). During the same year, Northern Sotho and Setswana narrative poems: *Sebilwane* (1961) and *Moepa-tshipi ga a bone* (1964) by Matome-Fela and G.C. Motlhasedi respectively had an impact on him. Co-incidentally in July 1971 an incident occurred within his clan-circle which prompted him to compose his narrative poem, *Ga se ya lešaka le*, within one month and published it in 1973, the year in which he satisfied the requirements for the degree of B.A. at Unisa as a part-time student.



H.M.L. Lentsoane started teaching at his alma-mater, Orlando High School, in February 1972. He taught Northern Sotho and History. He proceeded with the composition of poems, deriving his material from topical issues in his milieu, Johannesburg - hence the publication of *Mokgako* (1975).

H.M.L. Lentsoane married Ruth Motau in September 1976. They are blessed with three children, i.e. two boys and one girl.

After becoming tired of life in Johannesburg and its environs, H.M.L. Lentsoane left for Lebowakgomo township in Lebowa in February 1977 where he taught at Lebowakgomo Secondary School. In 1978 he was promoted to the principalship of Tshetlo Secondary School which is situated at Kgoši Mamokgalake Chuene's village. In 1979 he satisfied the requirements for the degree of Hons B.A. in African Languages (Northern Sotho) at Unisa. He also published *Ihlo la Moreti* in 1981.

At the end of February 1984, H.M.L. Lentsoane was transferred from Tshetlo Secondary School to Mokopane College of Education where he assumed duties in March 1984 as Head of the Department of Social Sciences and a lecturer in History because lecturers for Northern Sotho were many. From January 1985 to December 1986 he was appointed acting Vice-Rector at the same college - the period during which he composed poems for *Kgogamašego* which he published in 1988.

H.M.L. Lentsoane has been a lecturer of Northern Sotho at the University of the North (his alma mater) since July 1987. Some of the activities in which he is interested are

choral music and preaching. He is presently a member of Lebowakgomo Choral Society and a qualified preacher of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. He preaches in the Mphahlele Circuit.

#### **1.4.1 The Impact of Lentsoane's Personal Life on his Poetry**

A review of the impact of Lentsoane's personal life on his poetry can be discussed under these sub-headings:

- a. His academic life,
- b. His sufferings in metropolitan areas,
- c. His experiences as an adult or a teacher, and
- d. His personal attitude towards social behaviour and responsibility.

##### **1.4.1.1 The Academic Life of Lentsoane**

H.M.L. Lentsoane's career in education, particularly at university level, had tremendous impact on his philosophy of life. For instance, the poet contemplates on a number of issues such as living-together and inter-marriages at a level above ethnic prejudice and/or colour-bar in lines 1-8 of the last stanza of "*Re molokomong*" (We are one race) when he says:

*Ke tsetile ka nganga dihlaa,*

*Ka re: "Lerato ke lerato".*



*Lerato ga le na gore o Mošwešwe,  
Ga le na gore o Motswana goba Motswetla,  
Ga le na gore o Motsonga goba Mopedi,  
Ga le na gore o Lezulu goba Lethosa.  
Lerato ga le na kgethologanyo,  
Lerato le a tlemaganya. (1975:52)*

I objected strongly,  
Saying: "Love is love".  
Love has no regard for Southern Sotho,  
It has no regard for Tswana or Venda,  
It has no regard for Tsonga or Pedi,  
It has no regard for Zulu or Xhosa.  
Love does not discriminate,  
Love unites.

A view of life such as the one contained in the passage credits the poet for reasoning far ahead of many of his peers, elders and some statesmen who were still planning some discriminatory laws in some parts of the world during that time. For the sake of co-habitation and meaningful inter-action a learned person should no longer view other persons in terms of race, colour, creed, sex, territorial aggrandisement, etc. but merely as fellow human-beings. Such a view of a mixed society in Lentsoane emanates from the learning materials of some scholars and the experiences other people share in some open educational institutions where meaningful co-existence is being practised on a smaller

scale. The impact of the academic life of Lentsoane on his poetry bespeaks of him as a liberal poet.

#### 1.4.1.2 The Life of Lentsoane in Metropolitan Areas

Reference to his biography and poetry reveals that the life of H.M.L. Lentsoane in Metropolitan areas was mainly characterised by hardships. In an attempt to illustrate this idea, one infers from his biography that after matriculating, the poet failed to proceed to university due to financial problems. This problem causes one to believe that he was prompted to investigate how some single parents, especially mothers, managed to keep their children at school up to university. This, further, prompted him to write about the lot of African women who live in townships and serve Whites in their strife as breadwinners in the poem "*Bahlatswa-diaparo*" (Washer-women) (1975:36). In addition to this, during the same year he failed to go to university to further his education, obviously the poet was forced to look for employment although his parents were against the idea. It was under such circumstances that the poet experienced the crucial effects of red-tape and influx control measures as he stated in the poems entitled "*Boa gape bosasa*" (Come Back Tomorrow) (1975:61), "*Apara re sepele*" (Dress and let's go away) (1975:57), "*Mophamola-dikanapa*" (Bag-snatcher) (1975:32), etc. The circumstances that Lentsoane points out in these poems are sufficient evidence for his aversion to township life.

Such conditions caused the poet to compare the life of Africans and Whites in the environs of the metropolis. He realised the inequalities that exist in their life-styles. As

a counter-action to such imbalances, the poet appeals to White authorities to bring about genuine reforms. In his desire to have such problems addressed, he has succeeded to approach his subject-matter in his poetry with objectivity. Although he is a progressive poet, the approach of Lentsoane to such delicate political issues exonerates him from being a propagandist.

#### 1.4.1.3 The Experiences of Lentsoane as a Teacher

One could infer from the biography of Lentsoane that he was a teacher of History at school. Therefore, his career also has an impact on his poetry. One realises that the poet is interested in the development of human activities and then records such important historical events in his poetry.

For instance, Lentsoane pays tribute to his African and White heroes (idols) alike. Among his heroes that he celebrates, there are contributions of some prominent historical figures among Northern Sotho-speaking people such as the late Kgoši Mamokgalake L.J. Chuene who pioneered the self-government of Lebowa national state 1971:18-21), and the world-renowned American astronauts, viz. Michael Collins, Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin who successfully landed on and explored the moon and discovered that life was impossible on it because of lack of oxygen as his poem entitled "*Apollo ya Lesome-tee*" (Apollo 11) (1971:52-56) indicates. These are all the heroes about whom he wishes to motivate himself and his readers that perseverance is a necessary condition for success. These records of events in his poetry prove that Lentsoane is a historical poet.

In addition to recording important historical events as a teacher of history, Lentsoane has also pointed out the importance of abusive language to pupils in the classroom in an effort to maintain discipline. He tries to shift the emphasis from corporal punishment, that some teachers severely meted out to pupils who in turn resisted through violence and the burning of sjamboks, to the important effects of admonition, warnings, rebukes, etc.

These means of punishment may be more effective than corporal punishment if properly calculated and used as the poet has indicated in the last stanza of the poem entitled "*Mašapa*" (Insults) thus:

*Ke sefepi sa barutiši,*  
*Ke polelo ya go se lebalwe.*  
*Ke polelo ya go hlaba.*  
*Polelo ya kagišo. (1975:29).*

It is the whip of teachers,  
It is the language that will never be forgotten.  
It is the language that pierces.  
The language of good-will.

One infers from the use of the image "*sefepi*" (a whip) and the repetition of the term "*polelo*" (the language) in the extract above that Lentsoane views the use of abusive language as an alternative means to corporal punishment over which pupils, parents and the society in general are at logger-heads with teachers who assault, humiliate and injure

pupils.

Some parents have already taken drastic legal measures against teachers who abused corporal punishment and their employer, the Department of Education, has already lost huge amounts of money that could have been utilised for improvement of the education of the child as a result of such law-suits. Lentsoane has, therefore, successfully advised his colleagues (teachers) and the society against the detrimental effects of corporal punishment in favour of corrective words.

The record of historical events and the use of calculated abusive words as a means of maintaining discipline in the classroom are some of the laudable contributions Lentsoane has made in his poetry as a result of the experiences he gained in his role as a teacher.

#### **1.4.1.4 The Personal Attitude of Lentsoane towards Social Behaviour and Responsibility**

Lentsoane, like any other normal person, looks at the social injustices of his time with stern eyes. His attitude towards these social evils such as abuse of children in the forms of child-neglect in the poem "*Moeng-mofsa wa Batho*" (The New Arrival) (1975:25), child-sex abuse in the poem "*Bogolo*" (Adulthood) (1981:20-21), juvenile delinquency and its consequences in "*Bafsa ba lehono*" (Youths of Today) (1971:34-36), divorce and its consequences in "*Boa moratiwa*" (Come Back Darling) (1988:1-3), etc. is apparent in his poetry.

All the poems that Lentsoane has composed with regard to the social injustices that we have referred to in the paragraph above serve as some form of social censure. The poet does not spare the perpetrators of such evil acts. He slanders at them with the stroke of his pen. This approach to social problems of his time shows that Lentsoane is a social poet.

#### 1.4.1.5 Lentsoane, the Preacher

The effects of the faith of Lentsoane with regard to the existence of the Supreme Being as well as the impact of his calling as a teacher are apparent in his poetry. When we trace his conception of the Supreme Being, we realise his recent Christian faith in God does not supersede his traditional belief in the Supreme Being. He also acknowledges that all worshippers on earth link with their Supreme Being or God through either "*badimo*" (gods) or Jesus as their respective mediators.

Lentsoane is not prejudiced against either Supreme Being, but places Everyone in His context in his poetry. To substantiate this statement, we will refer to the following excerpts from his poetry:

In lines 1-3 of the 4th stanza of the poem entitled "*Le hlabile le leso*" (It has risen the dark one) he depicts the final date for a divorce case in a court of law when he says:

*Re ile re bona ya nke ga re bone,  
Ra tšea lehutšo ra bea pele,*



*Ra lahlela tšohle go Ramasedi. (1988:43)*

We were aware but pretended as if we were not,  
We cherished hope rather than anything else,  
We left everything to God.

From the cited passage, one gathers that the poet has faith in God in accordance with Christianity. The poet addresses God in several names in his poetry such as "*Ramasedi*" (Owner-of-lights), "*Kukamadišhaba*" (Overseer-of-nations), "*Alfa le Omega*" (Alfa and Omega), "*Mmopi*" (Creator), etc. In this way, the poet places the Christian God in His context.

In lines 35-38 of the verse "*Di a Ila*" (They are tinkling) - the title that suggests that police arrest Africans indiscriminately - the poet appeals for mercy from the Supreme Being when he says:

*Rakgolo, tsena thopeng le tatago,  
Le yena a bonane le tatagwe,  
Tatagwe a di lahlele go motseta,  
Motseta a fihliše sa rena sa ka mono go yena. (1981:32)*

Grandfather, contact your father secretly,  
And he should also consult his father,  
His father should consult the mediator,

The mediator should convey our grievance  
on this earth to him.

From the extract above, one gathers that the poet deals with the traditional belief of Africans in the Supreme Being. The long protocol of ancestral consultations and the anonymity of the deity which the poet only addresses in the pronoun "yena" (Him) are ample proof that he (the poet) has also placed ancestral worship in its context. The same pronoun that the poet has employed to refer to this deity suggests its human nature because he (the poet) has not capitalised it.

Reference to both extracts above proves that Lentsoane views religious worship from both the Christian and the traditional African perspectives. He does not despise either Supreme Being at the expense of another. This approach toward religious worship in his poetry is free of prejudice. Lentsoane has successfully placed each religious worship in its context. This approach exonerates the poet from propagating a particular religious doctrine and, further, justifies him as a genuine religious poet who presents his themes objectively.

All the material that one has discussed under the sub-headings that cover the impact of the personal life of Lentsoane on his poetry indicate that one's life-style becomes apparent in one's writings. One is, therefore, justified to conclude that poetry, like all works of art, mirrors one's personality either in part or in totality.



## 1.5 The Milieu of the Poetry of H.M.L. Lentsoane

Here we have to examine our poet, Lentsoane, and his society. There are certain formative factors in a society that mould or influence the personality of the poet. Such influences leave a print on the poet to such an extent that his poetic works will have its flavour. Society provides the poet with a setting or milieu in which he lives like it does in the case of Lentsoane. To substantiate these views, the quotation from D.B.Z. Ntuli (1984:15) might serve a useful purpose:

It is common knowledge that an artist cannot work in a vacuum.  
For him to produce anything a number of influences work on him.  
In the first place these influences are his experiences which he  
expresses in the medium of his choice. In the second place he is  
influenced by the modes of expression found in his cultural and  
artistic environment.

It is this concept "environment" that is referred to as a milieu or setting in any piece of literature. The concept "milieu" embraces place and time in the life of a society which has an influence on the poet. All sorts of milieux are possible. There could be a geographical milieu, e.g. high-veld, low-veld, karroo, kalahari, desert, sub-tropical, etc. There could be an urban or a rural milieu, a historical milieu, a rich or poor milieu, etc. There are in fact as many settings possible as circumstances in which people find themselves.

H.M.L. Lentsoane is a man who has lived in three worlds. One environment is rural, the others are urban and semi-urban or semi-rural respectively. All these milieux have had a tremendous influence on the substance of his poetry. We will examine the influences of the milieux of Lentsoane in his poetry. To justify our views, we will cite extracts from his poetry in the ensuing discussions.

#### **1.5.1 The Influences of Lentsoane's Milieu on his Poetry**

H.M.L. Lentsoane has lived in his three worlds as a child or pupil, an adult and a teacher. He is, therefore, fully experienced. In the ensuing discussions, we expose the influences of Lentsoane's milieu on his poetry.

##### **1.5.1.1 The Influences of the Rural Milieu**

A close examination of the poetry of Lentsoane reveals his positive attitude towards the traditional life of Africans in their rural milieu. For instance, the poet re-creates some traditional social institutions and practices, e.g. oral traditions, initiation schools, chieftainship, clans and totems, marriage, etc. in his works.

Lentsoane shows a positive attitude towards his place of birth, i.e. a rural milieu. In support to this statement, we infer from his biography that the poet has the love of listening to oral traditions from his grandmother. The influence of these oral traditions is apparent in lines 1-7 of the first stanza of the poem "*Gagešo gaMarishane*" (At Marishane's, my home) which has attributes of praise-poetry when he says:

*Ke motsemogolo wa kgoši Tseke*  
*Mmamagane mokgalagadi'a Mokwena*  
*Tseke'a Bapela o lle sebetse sa kgomo e bogale,*  
*A tšama a betologela ditšhaba tša gabo*  
*tša Masemola'a Mokwena.*  
*Ke mamokebe'a Šaaše sefetolanaga mohlaka*  
*Naga ya šala ka bogolo fela (1971:7)*

It is the big village of chief Tseke  
Mmamagane the shriller of Mokwena  
Tseke of Bapela has eaten the liver of a brave beast,  
He went about invading his own tribes of  
Masemola of Mokwena.  
It is the tornado of Šaaše (river) the changer  
of land into a swamp  
The land is left in its vastness only.

From this excerpt, such attributes of oral traditions, particularly praise-poetry, have come to light, e.g. the descendancy of Marishane clan and their totem, viz. a crocodile, and the pride of the male members of the clan is bravery for which they are associated with a violent tornado "*mamokebe*" which is a natural force. No other tribal army in the neighbourhood could match that of Marishane clan in prowess and strength.

The rural milieu in which Lentsoane was born and bred to his school-going age was not absolutely traditional because it had a flavour of Western Civilisation. By an absolutely traditional milieu we refer to the place and time (where and when) the kingship, initiation ceremonies, tribal battles intended for extension of one's empire and increase of livestock etc. were the order of the day. The rural setting in which our poet was born is characterised by school education, the erection of hospitals and churches, his heroes area celebrities towards national development in all spheres of life. In an attempt to illustrate and argue facts, we will refer to the second stanza of his first poem "*Sekolo se se phagamego sa Bopedi-Bapedi*" (Bopedi-Bapedi High School) which reads:

*E rokame tloukgolo gaMarishane'a tau,  
 Sephuthabana ba Marishane le Sekhukhune.  
 E ikadile mebotong ya mošwa Mothopo,  
 E ipatile le ntlokgolo ya Mawesele,  
 Mahlo e lebišitše ka mathoko ohle,  
 Kefa hlogong e rwele ya tshipi  
 E dula e phadima matšatši ohle  
 E ka ya dinatla tša meepong ya gauta. (1971:1)*

It is elevated the big-elephant at gaMarishane of lion,  
 The gatherer of children of Marishane and Sekhukhune.  
 It has spread itself on the plain beyond Mothopo  
 It lies opposite the Big-House (church) of Wesleyans,  
 Its eyes face into all directions,

On its head it is wearing an iron hat  
It remains shining every day  
As if that of strong men of the gold mines.

We deduce from the passage that the school and the church are two institutions of Western Civilisation. These institutions are often situated near each other because missionaries were pioneers in introducing learning to Africans, mainly reading and writing the Holy Scriptures, and simple calculations in Arithmetic. A rural milieu like what Lentsoane has reflected is pervaded with Western Civilisation.

Lentsoane has also re-created his experiences of the initiation school in his poetry. This, further, reveals that he had a positive attitude towards his rural milieu. Such an attitude of the poet has also become apparent in the last two lines of the 12th stanza of the poem "*Yunibesithi ya Leboa*" (University of the North) on the day of the graduation ceremony. He remarks about graduates thus:

*Mogobo dialoga di goba wa poo,  
Makgai di šikere mangwalo a bohlatse. (1971:14)*

The song of triumph graduates thundered,  
For staffs of status they are carrying certificates.

Through analogy, one is convinced that the poet has symbolised the graduation ceremony with the termination of the initiation school - hence his allusion to graduates and

certificates with traditional nomens "*dialoga*" (initiates) and "*makgai*" (staffs of status). From this analogy, we infer that people who obtain university education and those who undergo initiation school share tolerance and perseverance as two common attributes that are peculiar to both institutions.

Lentsoane still respects kingship and traditional medicine that are part and parcel of each community. He still views nobles and a traditional medicine-man of the royal kraal as the legitimate counsellors to the ruling chief or king. These people, with the chief or king in the pinnacle of the hierarchical order, occupy the highest social stratum in every community. In an attempt to pay tribute to community leaders, the poet has composed some elegies that are dedicated to the late chiefs such as "*Mohu Kgoši L.J. Mamokgalake Chuene*" (The late Chief L.J. Mamokgalake Chuene) and "*Segopotšo go mohu kgoši: F.M.S. Matlala*" (Tribute to the late chief: F.M.S. Matlala). In the Sotho tradition there is the maxim about the inadequacy of food which states: "*Go šetše sa kgoši le ngaka*" (There is little left for the chief and traditional medicineman) in an attempt to accord the specified personalities the status they deserve. The poet re-creates the influences of his rural milieu in his poetry.

In the same tone that enhances the status of these important personalities, Lentsoane makes an allusion to more controlled and respectable drinking habits that he approves of in lines 4 & 5 of the poem "*Bjala*" (Beer) when he states:

*Ke mogwera' maaparankwe le bakgomana,  
Mogwera' bonkadingala. (1988:10)*



It is the friend of tiger-wearers and nobles,  
The friend of traditional medicinemen.

In the lines cited above, the poet protests against abuse of intoxicating drinks among the rank and file today in contrast to more decent drinking habits peculiar to traditional African leaders who should be exemplary.

In the traditional rural milieu of Lentsoane, marriage was still regulated though to a little extent. Owing to the influence of his milieu on his personality, Lentsoane regards a marital institution as a practice that should transcend all barriers along colour, race, creed and language differences in his poetry. He, therefore, views marriage as a universal human phenomenon.

#### 1.5.1.2 The Influences of Western Civilisation

The influences of Western Civilisation on the milieu of H.M.L. Lentsoane are also discernible in his poetry. Such influences on the works of the poet prove that he (the poet) like every person is the product of his environmental factors. Both the rural and urban milieu are pervaded with influences of Western Civilisation such as school education, prisons and courts of law, Christianity, modern scientific inventions and discoveries, etc. In lines 3 & 4 of the 5th stanza of the poem "*Gagešo gaMarishane*" (At Marishane's, my home), the poet is fully proud of his roots where, like in youth, educational progress had already been afoot when he says:

*Di fatilwe didiba tša thuto*

*Di falala di sa fetše.* (1971:8)

They are dug the fountains of education  
They spill over endlessly.

It is clear from the lines that although it is a rural milieu, its impact on the poet is not altogether traditional. With its tinge of modern influences by then it had a great impact on the pursuance and attainment of his educational goals and the composition of his poetry.

Let us examine the means of rehabilitation in the milieu of the poetry of Lentsoane. With regard to individuals and/or groups of people who deviate from acceptable social and moral values such as youths and families of today the poet points out in his works that prisons and courts of law instead of tribal courts (*dikgoro*) serve as rehabilitation institutions. In these modern institutions, punitive measures such as bails, fines, suspended sentences and imprisonment for months, years and life, and death-penalty supersede those of traditional milieu that were determined in terms of sheep, goats and heads of cattle depending on the nature and gravity of the crime or case.

The urban milieu in which Lentsoane lived during part of his school-going age and the beginning of his teaching career also had a great impact on his poetry. The vast majority of his poems are based on the experiences he gained in this milieu such as discriminatory laws, all forms of crime including juvenile delinquency, the lot of Black women as



breadwinners, etc. in towns and cities. The effects of all these experiences are treated in details in the following chapters of this dissertation.

Man is a religious being. We deduce from the biography, milieu and poetry of Lentsoane that like many people of his time, he identifies himself with Christianity, i.e. the belief that Jesus Christ acts as a mediator between mankind and God due to the influence of Western Civilisation. A valid proof of this point of view is gathered from the Biblical allusions in his poetry. On the other hand, in some of his poems, we realise that the poet still alludes to traditional beliefs of Blacks, especially when he feels the Christian God does not give a hearing to problems of Blacks today. According to traditional beliefs of Africans, ancestral spirits serve as mediators between mankind and the Supreme Being (*Modimo*) as evidenced in some of his poems, viz. "*Lena le ileng?*" (What's wrong with you?) (1981:21), "*Phušulang!*" (Demolish!) (1988:37), etc.

The urban milieu in which Lentsoane lived in the metropolis led towards the awakening of the political aspect of his personality. The influence of such atmosphere has had a great impact on his poetry through which he protests against the laws that concern reservations on jobs and recreational facilities for some racial minority groups at the expense of the vast majority of people, lack of representation of Blacks in the legislative and executive bodies of some states. Like some poets of his time, Lentsoane advocates human freedoms of thought, speech and press, and also fundamental human rights. His milieux have moulded him into a liberal-minded poet. We are aware that the poet wrote about some discriminatory laws at a particular point in time. Nonetheless, RSA is undergoing a process of transformation and reconstruction that has contributed towards

the repeal of some laws. The milieu of Lentsoane has made him an observant poet when it comes to some events and incidents. In his poetry, he has recorded some modern scientific inventions and historic events such as the invention of spacecrafts and the landing of the American astronauts on the moon, and organ transplants in these poems, viz. "*Apollo ya Lesometee*" (Apollo 11) (1971:52-56) and "*Mogale wa Dipelo*" (The Hero of Hearts) (1971:18-21).

In the milieux of Lentsoane, school education overshadows the initiation school in the sense that boys and girls spend days mixed in the classrooms. It is in such a situation where interaction in the form of friendship across sex-line develops among youths of today in preparation for future adult-life. In the past such actions were frowned at by elderly people especially with regard to boys who were feared to become sissies. It would seem that H.M.L. Lentsoane was among those who suffered such humiliation and disapproval. Boys who were manly spent their days in the wilderness looking after livestock, hunting, etc. and their evenings at "men's *kgoro*" sitting around log-fires where they had to be orientated into manly aspirations, needs and deeds. In some poems that are based on the milieux of Lentsoane, he inculcates the sense of equality in the youths in preparation for life in a society where people should be treated alike irrespective of differences on the basis of colour, races, sex, language and creed.

The urban milieu also had a highly influential share on the poetry of H.M.L. Lentsoane. This urban milieu is chiefly the poet's life in the metropolitan areas in the vicinity of Johannesburg and its townships. This proves why the poet depicts the humiliations, frustrations and sufferings of the African males in the hands of White authorities when

they (Africans) seek jobs in several poems. For instance, in lines 1-3 of the second stanza of "*O tla bolela pele*" (You shall speak ahead), which is derived from the Afrikaans translations: *Jy sal voor gaan praat*), the poet exposes the terrible red-tape in the form of ill-treatment that White authorities exploit in their dealings with Africans in towns, cities and townships:

*Ke šobokilwe bokadinkata,  
"Khwelakhweleng" ke tsene ke fofa,  
Go wa ke kotamile godimo ga motho. (1975:58).*

I had been bundled up like rags,  
Into the police van I went flying,  
On falling I landed upon a person.

From the extract above, we infer that the poet detests his urban milieu in which people are forced to be criminals for the sake of their survival and of their relatives on behalf of whom they are breadwinners. Situations like these in the urban settings of Lentsoane prove why he is so averse to its environmental factors which are contributory to their censure.

Presently (i.e. during the writing of this dissertation), Lentsoane lives in a semi-urban milieu, i.e. in Lebowakgomo township. This milieu is semi-urban in the sense that it has mixed influences of both traditional and modern life. It is still early for us to ascribe themes of some poems exclusively to this milieu.

In short, we conclude this section on the influences of the milieu on Lentsoane's poetry by saying Lentsoane is a product of his milieu and so is his poetry right from the outset. This statement explains why the majority of his poems are urban, i.e. modern in flavour.

#### **1.6 The Development of Northern Sotho Poetry - The Contribution of Lentsoane**

Northern Sotho poetry, as an integral part of its literature in general, has undergone developments through its history like literature of other cultures. A review of Northern Sotho poetry, like that of literature in general, reveals three developmental phases that are based on similarities and dissimilarities, viz.

- a. the traditional phase
- b. the semi-traditional or transitional phase, and
- c. the modern phase.

This review on the development of Northern Sotho poetry is intended to place the poetry of Lentsoane in its context.

The categories of Northern Sotho poetry along the above-mentioned developmental phases are not meant for its compartmentalisation. The fact that Northern Sotho poetry reveals features that overlap clearly indicates that such a classification is only intended for study purposes. We will, therefore, give examples of Northern Sotho poetry that fall under each phase in order to justify such classifications.

The following publications are examples of Northern Sotho poetry that fall under the traditional phase in its developmental history:

- a. Ramaila, M.E. 1953. *Seriti sa Thabantsho*.
- b. Segooa, M.S.I. 1972. *Todi ya Lebowa*.
- c. Mokgalong, J.S. 1959. *Meeno le Direto*.
- d. Lephaka, J. (s.a) *Konkong*.

These works contain traditional praise-poetry which serves as the origin of the other stages in the development of Northern Sotho poetry. There are common features of traditional praise-poetry that centre mainly on these aspects: content (theme), structure (form) and language. For purposes of this dissertation, we shall only confine our discussions to theme and language (expression).

As regards content (theme) in all the works mentioned above, we come across praise-poetry that covers tribal units such as totems, clans, chiefs and counsellors who were reputed for their heroic deeds, divining-bones and animals, etc. Other elements of theme in traditional praise-poetry concern its names for example, names of associative references, in which the hero is not named, but is rather praised for his association, either in blood or marriage relationship or comradeship-in-arms. There are also "naming eulogues, i.e. those which are coined as aliases for the hero each one being inspired by its own set of circumstances as the poet sees them" (Kunene, 1971:35). Such praise-poetry dates back to when it lived in the mouths of its composers and bards. These oral compositions were transmitted from one generation to another around hearths in the

evenings, during special occasions such as the installation of a king, on wedding days, the celebration for the arrival of initiates, etc. so that they should not go into extinction. It is only with the advent of the art of writing that they were recorded in the said publications.

The language of traditional praise-poetry is sometimes characterised by a stain of archaic words that lend obscurity to its understanding. For instance, in its recorded form, we sometimes come across two dialectal variations of the same term in two compositions of two different writers as each original composition was recited in two different regions at different times or as a result of a misconception of one reciter in one area.

Praise-poetry entails dramatic verse in the sense that it deals with action. D.P. Kunene (1971:3) states that such action usually centres around "conditions of life which constitute an ever-present challenge to the valour of men...

- a. frequent wars, battles and skirmishes,
- b. frequent encounters with wild beasts, as in hunting,
- c. frequent hunting expeditions" (Mashabela 1979:36)

H.M.L. Lentsoane has contributed very little to this traditional phase of Northern Sotho poetry. He recorded only one praise-poem on the totem of his clan: *Moeno wa ba Lentsoane* (The Totem of the Lentsoanes') (1981:56).

One wonders what Lentsoane has done with the praise-poems of Marishane community



that his grandmother recited to him as he has mentioned in his biography (vide sub-heading 1.4). He runs the risk of letting those praise-poems go into oblivion.

With the advent of the art of writing and the influence of literary works of other cultures, the scholars (poets) of Northern Sotho have started to compose praise-poems that are only traditional in form while their theme deviated. Such compositions gave rise to a semi-traditional or transitional phase in the developmental history of the poetry of our language. The following examples are publications that contain some Northern Sotho poems that are classified under this phase:

- a. Matome-Fela. 1961. *Sebilwane*
- b. Mamadi, S.A. 1967. *Mekgolokwane. 2ed.*
- c. Machaka, S.R. 1967. *Naledi.*

With regard to content (theme) of the semi-traditional phase of praise-poetry, it deals with persons who are not necessarily lauded for their bravery in battles, encounters with dangerous wild beasts, etc. but for achieving success in a particular sphere of life, e.g. social, educational, etc. Other elements of content (theme) may include animals and natural phenomena. As regards the language of poetry in the semi-traditional phase, there appears a stereotyped metaphor in constructions like: "... *Ke nna...*" (It is I...) or "...*Ke mang ka ntle ga ...*" (... by whom except ...).

Poetry in this phase has a moral lesson such as orientating children into courage for achievement or success in whatever activity. Poetry in this phase is declaimed, i.e.

reciters engage in a high tone because the composition may be either epic or lyric in nature in an attempt to keep to the emotional state of the composer or reciter. Poetry in this phase shows features of both traditional and modern phases.

The following examples are Lentsoane's contributions to the transitional phase of Northern Sotho poetry:

- a. *Ga se ya lešaka le* (1973)
- b. *Segopotšo go mohu kgoši F.M.S. Matlala*
- c. *Mohu Kgoši Mamokgalake L.J. Chuene.*
- d. *Mogale wa Dipelo*, all (i.e. the last three) are contained in  
*Direto tša Mang le Mang* (1977).

Changes in the culture of a society have had a great influence on the praise-poetry that may be classified under the semi-traditional or transitional phase to such an extent that it reveals some characteristic features that are common to both traditional and modern poetry.

The influences which the literature of other cultures, particularly the influence of Western Civilisation, had on scholars of Northern Sotho led to the emergence of modern poetry. Modern Northern Sotho poetry has influences of modern English literature that our scholars (poets) delved deep into the study of its critical analysis. The art of practical criticism covers study techniques such as sense, intention, feeling, tone, sensory, emotional and intellectual connotations (commonly known through the mnemonic SIFT-SEI), etc.



The poetry that falls under this modern phase in the developmental stage of Northern Sotho poetry purports to examine the underlying truth about life, i.e. theme and how it is conveyed from man to man. The titles of modern poetry usually cover abstract concepts, concrete objects, nature and natural phenomena, fauna and flora, aspects of life, etc.

These publications serve as examples of Northern Sotho poetry that fall under its modern phase:

- a. Matsepe, O.K. 1970. *Molodi wa Mogami*.
- b. Machaka, S.R. 1979. *Seedi*.
- c. Madisha, M.P. 1979. *Kgopu ya Meroposela*.
- d. Tseke, B.N. 1977. *Therešo ke ya Mang*.
- e. Bopape, M. & Ratlabala, S. 1967. *Ithute Direto*.

Lentsoane has made a laudable contribution to Northern Sotho poetry that falls under this modern phase in all his works that are published so far. His publications contain narrative poems, sonnets, elegies and other poems about nature and natural phenomena, concrete objects and abstract concepts, man and his world (environment), fauna and flora, etc. He is undoubtedly one of the modern poets of Northern Sotho language.

## **1.7 Scope and Composition of Chapters**

The scope of this dissertation will be confined to a discussion of the most important

themes found in the poetry of Lentsoane. These include, among others, the following:

- a. Themes on love and family life
- b. Themes on women
- c. Themes on social problems and
- d. Themes on protest.

This is in no way an exhaustive study of themes found in the poetry of Lentsoane. A lot of research will be needed to do justice to these themes. However, we hope that the chosen themes will make the reader to have an insight into the poetry of Lentsoane.

The entire dissertation will comprise six chapters which embrace the themes mentioned above.

In Chapter 2, we study themes on Love and Family Life with special reference to various kinds of love, the unmarried state, marriage, the importance of a child in every family as a token of its blessing from God, and divorce with its evil consequences to spouses and children born of wedlock.

Chapter 3 focuses on themes on women. Our attention will be on the concept of Black Beauty among African women, the role of the modern African woman within the family, communal and international circles, a parity that the modern woman strives for with her male counterparts in all fields of life, and the impersonation of some African women in society today.

Themes on social problems receive attention in Chapter 4. Emphasis will be laid on aspects such as money as a source of evil, juvenile delinquency in modern societies, abuse of intoxicating drinks, and abuse of child-sex.

In Chapter 5, we shall concentrate on protest themes. Such themes embrace controversial issues in society such as influx control and its consequences, removals and their consequences, and finally the equality of people before God as a remedy for inhumane treatment of Blacks by their White counterparts.

Chapter 6 is a general conclusion on the themes under examination. Here we will give our views on the quality of Lentsoane's poetry and then show whether he has treated his themes successfully. Finally, we will make observations and recommendations for further studies of his poetry.

## 1.8 **Résumé**

The purpose of this chapter was to introduce to the reader the main formative influences that helped Lentsoane to write his poetry. Among these influences are the traditional and modern milieux in which he was nurtured; his exposure to literary works of poets such as O.K. Matsepe and P. Mamogobo. We also discussed briefly his contribution towards the development of modern Northern Sotho poetry. The concepts "theme" and "expression" are briefly defined and discussed. The main themes of his poetry are also highlighted. These will receive closer attention in the chapters that follow.

## CHAPTER II

### THEMES ON LOVE AND FAMILY LIFE

#### 2.0 Introduction

The first theme in the poetry of H.M.L. Lentsoane that we would like to examine is love and family life. The abstract concept "love" is an in-born human quality that serves as a basic ground for all sound inter-human relationships such as friendship, the family and other human institutions. A feeling of love in an individual may be well-developed or adversely affected by both hereditary, i.e. genetic make-up and environmental factors e.g. the home environment, the peer-group, parents and other adults with whom one may have daily contact during the process of upbringing.

A person who does not love or is not loved because of certain behavioural traits may remain a bachelor or a spinster. Each community views an unmarried adult person with suspicion. He is regarded a deviant. When the relationship of love exists between two people of opposite sex, the relationship of mutual trust takes place and then they marry each other. Love is, therefore, a human quality that brings about marriage and then we speak of a family so long as these two spouses are blessed with a child or children although one does not exclude exceptional cases where a family may still exist even if parents fail to beget a child. According to our African tradition, the number of children that are born into a family determines the extent of the success of the marriage and family life. Love keeps family life intact. In a family that is devoid of love, there are

always constant bickerings and grapplings between spouses, between parents and children and among children themselves with the result that such a family disintegrates. Divorce or when children escape from families and roam the streets indicate that love has failed in one or both partners to keep family-ties intact.

In this chapter we will discuss themes that appertain to Love and Family Life under the following headings: Love, The State of being unmarried, Marriage, The Child is a Treasure in every Family, and Divorce.

## 2.1 Love

There are many music composers, singers and authors who explore the theme of love. Each of these people contributes little towards the understanding of this multi-faceted concept.

DeVito (1985:199) quotes Ambrose in **The Devil's Dictionary** where Bierce defines love as "a temporary insanity curable by marriage or by removal of the patient from the influence under which he incurred the disorder. This disease, like caries and many other ailments, is prevalent only among civilized races living under artificial conditions, (barbarous) nations breathing pure air and eating simple food enjoy immunity from its ravages". Indeed love is a disease, particularly when one looks at some people (Whites) who originally come from developed countries where lifestyle is sophisticated and food is produced in bulk and stored with preservatives in refrigerators (i.e. artificial condition). Lovers walk in the street hand in hand, hug each other, kiss each other publicly even



premaritally without a guilty-conscience. This is in contrast with nations of African origin (in primitive conditions) who depend on subsistence farming. They were never boisterous about their love affairs. Both love and sex are secretive and shameful premises among the adult and the young. With the advent of Western Civilisation, some Africans in developing and under-developed countries feel divorced from reality and have decided to emulate other people in showing off love affairs as a result of the influences of the mass-media through advertisements, films, plays, picture, etc.

Perhaps the variety of ways in which people love makes a single attempt to define love inadequate. Such various ways of love also give rise to six kinds of love that John Alan Lee has identified in *The Colours of Love* (DeVito 1985:203) as follows:

Ludus love

Storge love

Manic love

Pragmatic love

Eros love

Agapic love

A brief explanation of each kind of love will definitely bring us closer to the premise of love that H.M.L. Lentsoane treats.

*Ludus love* is a game of fun in which *ludic lovers* hold emotions in check. Ludic love is self-controlled. The ludic lover retains a partner so long as he or she is interesting and

amusing. A ludic lover changes partners frequently for the sake of fun. Like ludic love, *storge love* lacks passion and intensity. *Storgic love* is sometimes difficult to distinguish from friendship because both share the same qualities: mutual caring, compassion, respect, and concern for the other person. Storgic love is slow in developing, burning and dissolving. *Manic love* is obsessive; the manic lover has to possess his or her lover completely - in all ways, at all times. And in return the manic lover wishes to be possessed, to be loved intensely. Manic love is characterised by extreme jealousy, depression, self-doubts, and the manic lover needs constant attention and affection because of his poor self-image. In *pragmatic love*, pragmatic lovers should match on the basis of similar interests, attitudes, personality characteristics, religion, politics, hobbies, etc. The pragmatic lovers prefer to marry and settle down and get on with the business of living. In *eros love*, the erotic lover focuses on beauty and physical attractiveness, mostly to the exclusion of more important and more enduring qualities. An erotic lover often has an ideal image of beauty that is unattainable in reality. An erotic lover is sensitive to physical imperfections of a loved one. Eros is hedonistic and selective in its love objects. *Agape* is a compassionate love, it is an ageless, self-giving love. Agape is non-rational and non-discriminative. It is a spiritual love. It is love offered with no concern for any kind of personal reward or gain (DeVito 1985:200-203). In an attempt to sum up these six kinds of love, in Greek, one learns of three terms that refer to love affairs: "Phileō" is the love among fellow-men (Douglas 1962:753), "Agape" is the love of God towards mankind, and "Eros" is the love that is elicited by attractive qualities of the loved one, i.e. the love between husband and wife (Douglas 1962:200). It is this third term that covers Ludus love, Storge love, Manic love and Pragmatic love. All these terms that are grouped under "Eros" refer to love affairs that one has to confine oneself to



discussions that emanate from the poetry of H.M.L. Lentsoane.

It is my firm belief that all the love affairs mentioned above need reinforcement for the sake of maintaining harmonious relationships. In the first stanza of this poem "Lerato" (Love), Lentsoane compares the reinforcement of love between fiances with the stirring of fire when he says:

*Le swana le mollo*

*Le a tuka*

*Le a tima,*

*Le kgauma ka dikgabo*

*Le bešetšwa ke kwano.*

*Sebešo ke pelo tša baratani.*

*La hloka babešetši*

*Le a tima,*

*Gwa fifala dipelong*

*Gwa se hlwe go tšeelanwa mello. (1971:38)*

It is like fire

It burns

It extinguishes,

It bursts into flames

It is stirred by understanding.

The hearth is the hearts of lovers.

Lacking stokers  
It extinguishes,  
It darkens in the hearts  
There will be no longer sharing of fires.

In the above excerpt the poet compares the intensity of love with burning fire. Like fire love dies out when there is no reciprocation of feelings between two lovers. Here the poet has used the most common images to reinforce the significance of love in life. The *hearth* (*sebešo*) is a common place in any family and is aptly equated with a seat of love namely the *heart*. Fire also represents light, and if there is no light, especially at night, darkness sets in. In the same way, when the feeling of love between two partners no longer draws them closer to each other, sadness sets in their hearts. Harmonious relationship is affected - love "dies" a natural death owing to lack of reciprocation.

In the second stanza of the same poem referred to above, Lentsoane compares love with a plant when he says:

*Le swana le mohlašana*  
*Le a kgolakgolelwa*  
*La hlagolelwa ngwang*  
*La golela pele.*  
*Le a nošetšwa,*  
*Le nošetšwa ka ditiro*  
*Le nošetšwa ka dipolelo.*

*Go sego bjalo le a pona*

*La hloka mmala*

*Mafelelong la hwa. (1971:38)*

It is like a young tree

It is tendered

Weeds are removed from it

It grows lushly.

It is watered

It is watered with acts

It is watered with utterances.

Otherwise it will wither

Lose its colour

Eventually it dies.

The image of fire in the first stanza of the poem "Lerato" (Love) is magnified and reinforced by that of a small tree in the above extract. For a young tree to grow well and fast, it must be looked after. Elements that may cause it to wither, must be removed. It must be watered and nurtured adequately to enable it to grow lushly. Human love is no different from such a shoot. It needs care and constant revitalisation. Lovers must show by deeds and speech that they care for each other continually. Failure to do this diminishes both the heat and intensity of love. Through the effective use of protracted similes on nature in the preceding excerpts, the poet has been able to draw a convincing image of the nature of true love.

Even though Lentsoane advocates mutual tender care between lovers through deeds and speech, for example, exchange of gifts, fondling and addressing each other dearly, one still feels such practices of strengthening love are foreign to our Sotho (if not African) culture as a whole. In our tradition, it is only proper for a male lover, especially one who is about to marry, to send gifts to his fiancée - hence the idiomatic expression "*go ja dipute*" is coined. It is an impropriety and a weakness on the part of a woman to reciprocate whatever her fiancé does publicly in words and actions as the poet has already indicated. Lentsoane has, therefore, introduced practices of Western culture to Africans in connection with the theme of love so that they (Africans) may emulate. Indeed both lovers need mutual tender care otherwise their love affair is likely to fade away with the passage of time. The truth becomes apparent in cases where the couple is married to each other. One spouse particularly a male one often leaves the wife under a misconception that she is complacent with her marital status and then goes out to make extra-marital love affairs while the converse also holds. He becomes oblivious of the fact that the female spouse needs the same or even more care than his mistress, eventually their love becomes shaky. With regard to this theme of love, the onus lies with everyone to choose and make a happy life-partner.

Lentsoane shows that true love is boundless of these barriers: one's place of settlement (i.e. urban or rural), ethnicity, languages and colour. This view is clearly expressed in the love poem, "*Mihloti*" - a female Tsonga student who it would seem had attracted the poet. He managed to prompt a conversation with her in the 6th stanza of "*Re molokomong*" (We are one race) thus:

*O se ntšhitše ka dinko ngwana' Motsonga*

*A re: "Re ka se kwane ka polelo"*

*Ke ganne nnang mošemane'a Bopedi*

*Ka re: "Mihloti, lerato ga le na mellwane,*

*Lerato ke la mang le mang,*

*Lerato ga se papadi". (1975:51)*

She shot it out through the nostrils the Tsonga child

She said: "We shall not understand each other".

I strongly objected the boy of Bopedi

I said: "Mihloti, love has no bounds,

Love is for everyone,

Love is not a child's play".

Through the repetition of the word "*lerato*" (love), the poet has employed linking, i.e. oblique linking in lines 4 & 5 and vertical linking in the initial stages of lines 5 & 6 in an attempt to elucidate the theme of love. With a careful choice of words and dramatic action, the poet states abundantly clear that the language of love transcends all impediments, i.e. it is universal to mankind inasmuch as love is.

Lentsoane, further, amplifies and reinforces the universal nature of love and the medium of communication related to it among people in lines 7-11 of the last stanza of "*Re molokomong*" (We are one race) when he says:

*Lerato ga le kgethologanye,  
Lerato le a tlemaganya.  
Re molokomong,  
Re bana ba thari e swana.  
Kganthe ga re Bathobaso? (1975:52)*

Love does not discriminate,  
Love binds.  
We are one race,  
We are children of the black nation  
Are we not Blacks?

Through the repetition of the word "*lerato*" (love) in the initial stages of lines 1 & 2, his careful choice of phrases at the end of lines 1-4, and the use of the rhetorical question in the last line of the extract above, the poet emphasises the unifying force of love. Love does not conform to man-made laws that regulate human relationships. On the contrary, it is cohesive and binds people of alien cultures, nationalities and colour together. In my opinion, that is what Lentsoane is trying to bring to the attention of the reader.

## **2.2 The State of being Unmarried**

The state of being unmarried is an integral part of the theme of Love and Family Life. According to our African tradition, bachelors and spinsters are viewed with suspicion while their unmarried status is regarded as taboo. In the past there were very few

unmarried Africans but they have seemingly increased tremendously with the advent of Western Civilisation.

Before we can state the fruits of love, we have to show that some people misconstrue love affairs to mean misbehaviour. Misbehaviour by some married couples has caused some individuals in society to view marriage with scepticism. Consequently such individuals tend to avoid committing themselves to any marriage contract.

According to our African tradition the opinion of a young man or woman was never considered when it comes to the choice of a marriage partner. Parents regulated marriage by choosing partners for their children. The individual's freedom of choice was unheard of. Once they are married, both partners had to tolerate each other in all respects. With the advent of Western Civilisation the individual has the sole freedom of choice of a lover or partner on the basis of many grounds including one's behaviour and physical appearance. Since one's behaviour has become a fundamental consideration when it comes to the choice of a spouse today, Lentsoane illustrates the following forms of misbehaviour:

In lines 1-4 of the first stanza of "*Ba mo fetile*" (They passed her by), the poet elucidates the theme of being unmarried by exposing that bragging causes some women to become spinsters when he says:

*O kukakukile nko Sekganyi*

*A šonyalala nke o a nkgelwa,*



*A ngotlofaditše ka ganong,*

*A ipona motho ba bangwe aowa. (1975:17)*

She repeatedly lifted up her nose, The Braggart,  
Turning up her nose as if smelling something rotten,  
Hardly opening her mouth,  
Seeing herself a person, others no.

In the extract above, the poet has exposed some actions that cause some ladies, like Sekganyi (Braggart) to stay unmarried. Sekganyi is a character that symbolises a young lady who coldly turned down love-suits from young men, viz. "boSetšhepi" (Well-dresser and company) and "boSekhorane" (Rich and company) during her hey-days as if they (young men) were non-entities while their names explain the abundance in which they lived. Consequently she is a spinster. Some of her actions such as those the poet has expressed in these images "*kukakukile nko*" (repeatedly lifted up her nose), "*šonyalala*" (turning up her nose) and "*ngotlofaditše ka ganong*" (Hardly opening up her mouth) speak well of her pride that has led towards her state of being unmarried which she seemingly regrets. For instance, many African women have become spinsters today because they boast of their high level of educational achievements which open favourable working opportunities for them. Consequently, they are usually under the impression that since they are self-sufficient to maintain themselves and their children, they cannot tolerate their male partners who covet and court other women. Then such women prefer to stay unmarried even though they will never stop falling in love with other men. These women are torn apart between two poles, one of African culture that only protects males to

marry as many wives as they please while it constrains women, and that of Western Civilisation that loosely accommodates one who has extra-marital relationships. The clash in cultures causes the rate of unmarried Africans, particularly women, to increase because men scrutinise and despise their behaviour. Under such circumstances everyone is found to be fastidious in the choice of a life-partner.

When such bragging women age, they eventually expect men, who in turn stand aloof, to approach them. Consequently their only hope and consolation lie in widowers and divorcees as prospective life-partners.

One cannot overlook the influence of a mob in elucidating the state of being unmarried, particularly among women today. In lines 6 & 7 of the first stanza of the poem "*Ba ile ke setlaela*" (They called me a simpleton), Lentsoane emphasises this point. He asserts:

*Sehlopha ga se nagane,  
Go gopola o tee bohle ba latela. (1975:18)*

A crowd does not think,  
One thinks and the rest follow.

In relation to the expression above, the poet illustrates by means of characters such as "*boMmapule*" (Mmapule and company) and "*boMatlakala*" (Matlakala and company) who formed a clique whose influence Mokgadi resisted and they have eventually become spinsters. Out of frustration such spinsters resort to heavy drinking and smoking in order

to relieve themselves of their frustrations. Once they are under the influence of intoxicating drinks, they flirt. Consequently they are left seduced and bear illegitimate children to such an extent that they no longer care about their well-being. A woman who has resisted clique influences becomes successful in life because everyone knows that manners maketh a man.

The theme of the state of being unmarried is also reflected in the attitude of certain women. Such women fall in love with men not because they really love them but simply because such men have ample material possessions such as cars, businesses, etc. In lines 5-10 of the first stanza of "*Go lla go ka se thuše selo*" (Crying will not help), Lentsoane criticises such women and warns them against such behaviour and relationships. He states:

*Ke kgale ba go loma tsebe,  
Ba re Lefihlile bula mahlo,  
Bula ditsebe o itire motho,  
O kwe dikeletšo tša diputswa.  
Boradifatanaga ke banna ba basadi,  
O ka se ba humele. (1975:19)*

It is long they have been advising you,  
Saying Lefihlile open your eyes,  
Open your ears and behave like a person,  
Take the advice of the elders.

Car-owners are men of other women,  
You will never keep them to yourself.

In these idiomatic expressions: "*loma tsebe*" (advise), "*bula mahlo*" (open your eyes) and "*bula ditsebe*" (open your ears), the poet implores such stray women like his imaginary character, Lefihlile, to heed the advice of the elders by behaving well. He advises women never to rely upon such men as another imaginary character, Rantlha, whom he cites because they usually symbolise "sots and thralls of lust" (Smyth & Swacina 1987:93). Through the hyperbolic expression in line 1 of the excerpt above, the poet vividly explains that such men are only play-boys who enjoy seducing women. After frustrating the future of such women, such men usually disappear for good and search for a new company. In this way, such men keep on rendering women unfit for marriage.

In every normal community, spinsters and bachelors are regarded as social deviants. They carry about a stigma due to their immoral acts. They tend to console themselves with their professional certificates that serve as their source of income and "substitutes" for husbands or wives. Under no circumstances can a human being share mutual love with a document. Such spinsters are only bent to perpetuate flirtation when they realise the predicament in which they find themselves. Lentsoane, therefore, crystallises the theme of unmarried status as part and parcel of Love and Family Life.

### 2.3 Marriage

In dealing with the theme of marriage, one purports to examine to what extent it

contributes to the understanding of the major theme of Love and Family Life. After Lentsoane has warned everyone about the causes of unmarried status, he then focuses on the theme of marriage and its related fruits of love.

Before one can embark on a detailed discussion of the theme of marriage, one has to explain the concept "marriage". T. Alton Bryant (1967:345), whom J.G. Makwakwa refers to in *How to Choose a Marriage Partner*, defines marriage as "an intimate personal union to which a man and a woman consent, consummated and perfected in a life-long partnership of mutual love and commitment. It is also a social institution regulated by the Word of God and by the laws and customs which a society develops in order to safeguard its own continuity and welfare". It must be pointed out that there are two major purposes for which God had to institute marriage, viz. a unitive purpose and a procreative purpose. Through a unitive purpose, husband and wife become one flesh while through procreative purpose, God proclaimed that mankind should be fruitful and multiply.

In the first stanza of "*Lenyalo*" (Marriage), Lentsoane is sceptical about how people regarded love and marriage. He depicts marriage as follows:

*Ke noka yeo e elago*  
*E elago ka dinthulwane,*  
*E elago ka maatla. (1971:51)*

It is a river that flows  
That flows in floods,



That flows strongly.

Here the poet compares marriage with a river in flood. Such a river is associated with the chaos that underlies marriage. This presupposes that only sober-minded people may enter into marital contracts. Despite the chaotic nature of marriage, this metaphor of a river symbolises the continuity of marriage which the poet has reinforced with the repetition of the construction "*e elago*" (that flows) which serves as a linking-device, i.e. oblique linking in lines 1 & 2 and vertical linking in the initial stages of lines 2 & 3. Therefore, marriage took place in the past, it takes place today and it will take place in future. The poet gives a clear picture of the theme of marriage and, further, sounds a warning to prospective marriage-partners in lines 4-9 of the first stanza of the same poem. He maintains:

*Bangwe re thuntha gabotse*

*Bangwe ra phaphamala*

*Ra ba bohwefo bokamafofa*

*Ra gogolwa bokamagodi,*

*Ya re hlatša moo e ratago*

*Ra felela lebopong la yona. (1971:51)*

Some of us swim well

Others float,

We become as light as feathers

We are being washed away like flotsam,

It spills us where it likes

We end up on its bank.

In lines 1 & 2 of the extract, the poet elucidates the theme of marriage by contrasting two categories of people. The first group is that of people who feel like fish in the water when it comes to marriage while the second group comprises failures. The poet employs a simile in lines 3 & 4 of the same excerpt in order to crystallise failures in marriage. Through the use of the hyperbole in the concluding couplet, the poet illustrates that such failures in marriage cannot be tolerated in any normal society. Lentsoane employs apt images to show that some people may succeed while others may fail in establishing family-ties through marriage.

Lentsoane advocates deregulation of marriage. With regard to the choice of a marriage partner, the poet wishes to discourage ideas which some people, especially the elders, are still obsessed with, namely: that a suitable marriage-partner should be culled from rural areas only, that she should belong to one's cultural group, etc. According to our African tradition, anyone outside such prescribed realms does not qualify for marriage-partnership. It appears that although the poet is aware that the high rate of divorce is to some extent attributable to the violation of such African customs today, he strongly feels that the regulation of marriage is out of vogue. He, therefore, advocates inter-marriage in lines 6-8 of the third stanza of "*Ga go ngwana' gae*" (There is no home-child) when he says:

*Ga go sa na le gore ngwana' gae.*



*Bopedi o hwetša betši ba Mathosa,  
Wa gahlana le ba Mazulu le Bakgatla. (1975:45)*

There is no longer such a thing as a homechild.  
At Bopedi one finds brides of Xhosa descent,  
One meets those of Zulu and Bakgatla descent.

The excerpt shows clearly that marriage to a person belonging to one's cultural group is no longer valid. It is no longer a surprise to find a bride of Xhosa, Zulu or Kgatla (Tswana) descent among a Northern Sotho speaking community. Lentsoane feels that one should be free to choose his/her marriage-partner. In his words:

*Lesogana topa moo o bonago go topega,  
Lesogana topa moo o bonago o rata,  
E sego moo go ratago mokgalabje,  
Moo go kgahla mokgalabje e sego wena. (1975:46)*

Young man pick up where you find it pickable,  
Young man pick up where you find you like,  
Not where it pleases the old man,  
There it pleases the old man, not you.

Through repetition of the phrase "*Lesogana topa moo o bonago ...*" (Young man pick up where you find ...), the poet lays stress on one's freedom of conscience in the choice of

a marriage-partner. Marriage should not be bound by laws and regulations that are based on racial and colour considerations. This opinion supports the Northern Sotho adage "*Mmapelo o ja serati, senyakelwa ga a se rate*" (One man's meat is another man's poison).

#### **2.4 The Child is a Treasure in Every Family**

The theme that the child is a treasure in every family contributes towards a better understanding of love, marriage and family life. The birth of a child into a family clearly indicates that God has blessed the love and marriage between the spouses. According to the African (Sotho) tradition, a family with a large number of children is regarded wealthy. When a child was born into an African family in the past, there was great pleasure to an extent that it was customary to slaughter either a sheep or goat as a token of welcoming it. The birth of the first child and others in a family is indicative of a blessed and successful marriage. A family in which no child was born was viewed with suspicion, despised and subjected to disparaging remarks, especially the wife who could even be taken to medicinemen for "*go bofela*" practice so that she could conceive. Although this practice has many demerits, it is an attempt to elucidate the theme that the child is a treasure in family life.

The worst demerit of "*go bofela*" practice is that the woman who has to undergo such medicinal treatment is left entirely at the mercy of the medicineman while the husband is often advised never to touch her as his interference is likely to fail the efforts. Very often the medicineman is a male who is likely to covet the woman under his medicinal

treatment and then he prescribes as part of his medicinal charge to make love with her with the result that the woman may conceive and bear an illegitimate child. Nonetheless, it is in favour of this "*go bofela*" practice that Lentsoane persuades the relatives of his character, viz. Kanyane, the husband to Mahlako who has given birth to an illegitimate child that they should brush aside suspicions and then welcome the newly born child in lines 56-60 of "*Lebogang*" (Be thankful) when he says:

*Lebogang le filwe,*  
*Mpho ga e galalwe.*  
*Lebogang Mpho o fihlile,*  
*O le bipile magole,*  
*O fahlolotše Kedibone teng. (1988:8)*

Be thankful you are given,  
A gift is never unwelcomed.  
Be thankful Gift has arrived,  
He has covered your shortcomings,  
He has opened Kedibone's womb.

With the repetition of the word "*Mpho*" (Gift) in lines 2 & 3 of the extract above, the poet has employed pun in which he brings about ambiguity that lends obscurity of meaning to the reader. The use of such pun is intended to emphasise that a child who is born through medicinal assistance, even though illegitimate, should be viewed as a *gift* from God and also be named *Gift*. In addition to this pun, the poet also uses consecutive

end-rhyme scheme in lines 1-4, and the idiomatic expression in the last line of the same extract in an attempt to lay stress that Mpho (Gift) spearheads the birth of other children in the family. He, further, stresses that whoever is dissatisfied with an illegitimate child who is born through suffering, is intended to defeat the purpose of "*go bofela*" practice which is to ensure the continuity of the family or clan, luck, pleasure and satisfaction in the family.

If the above-mentioned traditional practice of producing children fails, the wife's younger sister or any of her paternal sisters could be given to the husband as "*tlhatswadirope*" (thighs-cleanser) for the purpose of procreating children on behalf of the barren wife. This was a welcomed practice which assured the barren wife of the security and status she deserved. In contrast with such a practice, people have resorted to inhumane and barbaric ways of dealing with such a crisis today. The husband either neglects the barren wife or expels her and re-marries a wife of his choice for the sake of procreating a child who is really a treasure in every family. Lentsoane aligns himself with the theme that the child is invaluable in every family in the first stanza of the poem "*Ngwana*" (A child) which reads:

*O gauta ya bophelo,*  
*O nyakwa ke bohle,*  
*Thari ye tšhweu le e ntsho,*  
*Digole le difofu,*  
*Difoa le dimuma. (1981:9)*

You are the gold of life,  
You are wanted by everyone,  
Black and White cradles,  
Cripples and blinds,  
Deafs and dumbs.

By employing the metaphor of gold which is a precious metal in line 1 of the extract above, the poet shows clearly that children are greatly valued because all people irrespective of race, colour and physical handicaps yearn to bear them (children) - hence modern scientific research in medicine has discovered new methods to ensure child-birth, viz. Gametes Intra-Fallopian Test (GIFT) through which a mixture of the man's sperms and the woman's eggs is introduced into the Fallopian tube of the woman where fertilisation takes place naturally, and a test-tube or in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) through which a woman's eggs or the surrogate mother's eggs are fertilised by the husband's sperms and then inserted into the surrogate mother's womb through the vagina, etc. In the same breath that the child is valuable in every family, in the first line of the second stanza of the same poem, the poet expresses satisfaction to everyone or the family into which a child is born when he says:

*O seetša sa bophelo.* (1981:9)

You are the light of life.

The poet has employed a metaphor of light (*seetša*) through which he stresses the importance of a child in a family. The birth of a child in a family where it was

desperately needed is equated with light. Without light a traveller feels forsaken and frustrated inasmuch as one who lacks a child feels rejected and disillusioned. The image of light symbolises hope - the hope of leading a happy life. The birth of a child into a family ensures parents of continuity or revival and security at old age and after death. Lentsoane draws an apt image from nature through which he elucidates the significance of a child in a family.

Children are usually treated differently in different families. The same applies even to children within the same family. Lentsoane also refers to the same issue in the 3rd stanza of "Ngwana" (A Child) which reads:

*Go bangwe o bjalo ka taamane,  
Wa hwetša o a emaemelwa,  
Wa bitšwa ngwana-ngwako.  
Go bangwe o motlalo  
O tšewa ke noka ya bophelo. (1981:9)*

To some you are like diamond,  
If found, you are well-cared for,  
And you are called the child-of-the-house.  
To others you are abundance,  
You are swept by the river of life.



The poet employs contrasting images in the extract above in order to show two groups of parents with regard to their views in the treatment of children. On the one hand there are over-protective parents while on another there are negligent parents with regard to the treatment of children. In the extract above, the poet compares the only child with diamond in line 1. Diamond is a precious and scarce metal to obtain. Once procured, diamond-diggers or smugglers are assured of wealth in the form of vast sums of money. Therefore, one should meticulously look after it. With the simile of diamond (*taamane*) coupled with the choice of a compound word "*ngwana-ngwako*" (the child-of-the-house), the poet expresses an opinion that an only child or children for whose birth parents suffered are often afforded tender care. Parents of such children regard them (children) in high esteem and over-protect them whereas with the use of the word "*motlalo*" (abundance) - a metaphor of plentiness of crops some of which have to be eliminated, the poet seems to assert that other parents take little or no heed of their children. With this negligent group of parents, the poet shows why many children are exposed to all forms of abuse today such as battering, sexual abuse, early pregnancies, venereal infections, abortion, etc. Through his apt imagery in the above extract, Lentsoane illustrates that such difference in the treatment of the child cannot in any way dampen the spirit of the theme that a child is a treasure in every family.

Children need to be treated with the human dignity they deserve at all stages of their development before and after birth in accordance with medical programmes that Departments of Health and Social Welfare have designed and prescribed in all countries. In combating the crucial problem of child-abuse that threatens society today, Lentsoane points out that children need due respect, care and consideration in lines 20-26 of his



verse "Ngwaga wa Ngwana" (The International Year of the Child) which reads:

*1979, o ntirile motho lefaseng.*

*Ke gona lenyaga ke bonago ke phela,*

*Ke gona lenyaga ke bontšhwang la mohlagare,*

*Ke gona lenyaga ke fiwago dimpho,*

*Ke gona lenyaga ke ikwago gore ke nna ngwana,*

*Ke gona lenyaga ke bonago batswadi. (1981:26)*

1979, you have made me a person on earth.

It is this year that I see myself alive,

It is this year that I am shown a molar,

It is this year that I am given gifts,

It is this year that I feel I am a child,

It is this year that I see parents.

The poet employs parallelism through the repetition of the same phrase "*Ke gona lenyaga ke...*" (It is this year that ...) in the initial stages of the lines and the idiomatic expression "*Ke gona lenyaga ke bontšhwang la mohlagare*" (It is this year that I am shown a molar) to stress that children need to be accorded the status they deserve. He reminds everyone about parties that parents and child-welfare organisations hold in honour of children, that parents start to give children a say in the expression of their feelings and ideas about the past, the present and the future. Children should no longer be dictated to. At some stage children like adults need advice, guidance and consultation instead of instruction and

coercion in matters that concern them lest a clash ensues between children and their parents, educators and other authorities. Lack of mutual understanding between children and their mentors causes them to break away for more serious criminal offences. We should always co-operate with the child and treat it with meticulous care in its upbringing for the sake of crime prevention which is better than cure. Through repetition and a careful choice of words, Lentsoane contributes towards the crystallisation of the theme that a child is a treasure in every family because it needs tender care.

On the strength of the theme that the child is a treasure in family life, Lentsoane rejects birth control measures despite influences of Western cultures on African women and certain socio-economic measures that militate against a large African family today. He strongly sounds his firm word of reprimand to Africans who have already adopted family-planning measures in the first stanza of the poem "*Ge ba hlokwa ba ilalo!*" (That they are so scarce!) when he says:

*Lena le nyarela šobeng lefe,*

*Ge le re ba hlokwa ba ilalo,*

*La re motho a itire leeba?*

*Le reng le pheka ka la mohwelere?*

*Le reng le iphahla le ipona?*

*Ga le ke le gopolela bosasa?*

*Matšhona ona le a bea le mang?*

*Dikotsi tšona?*

*Mathata ona?*

*Aowa, teng ga e laolwe.* (1981:10)

From which opening do you emerge,  
While they are so scarce,  
Do you say one should make oneself a dove?  
Why do you obstruct with that of ironwood?  
Why do you beblind yourself while you are  
looking at yourself?  
Don't you ever think of tomorrow?  
With whom do you leave disease?  
What about accidents  
What about real problems?  
No, birth should not be controlled.

In the extract above, irony abounds as the poet objects strongly against Africans who practise family-planning. This irony becomes apparent through the use of rhetorical questions in lines 1-9 coupled with idiomatic expressions in lines 3-5 when the poet vividly illustrates that he fails to understand why mankind corrects God by applying birth-control measures. This step clearly proves that mankind is oblivious of all hazards of life that cause a high rate of infantile mortality. From the use of the interjective "*aowa*" (no) in the last line, one deduces that the poet vehemently objects to this practice. He amplifies his objection in lines 1-2 of the second stanza of the same poem:

*Leeba ke leeba,*

*Motho ke motho.* (1981:10)

A dove is a dove,

A man is a man.

The poet has employed word-repetition in "*leeba*" (dove) and "*motho*" (man) because he emphasises that man differs from other creatures which have to contend with what nature has predetermined for them. God has imbued man with the capacity of thinking through which he can devise some means of fending for his children despite their large numbers while the off-springs of other creatures are left at the mercy of nature even if in some cases they may be limited to two. Family-planning, therefore, militates against the theme that the child is a treasure in every family.

Lentsoane points out the disadvantages of birth-control measures to mankind which the majority of people might not be aware of in lines 8-10 of the second stanza of the poem cited above when he says:

*Kgotlelelang lena le di akelago,*

*Re tlogeleng ka khutšo,*

*Re ate, re lekane le lešabašaba.* (1981:10)

Carry on you who welcome them,

Leave us in peace,

That we may multiply, and be equal to sand.

From the excerpt above, one deduces that family-planning is not acceptable. The poet, further, warns whoever advocates birth-control to stop because it is anti-human, anti-Christian and anti-God. It is God, the Creator, who indisputably proclaimed mankind to multiply through the Israelites. No-one should, therefore, stand in the way of God. That is why contraceptives have so many adverse effects, inter alia: some children are born with under-developed and/or undeveloped parts of the body such as limbs, one eye on the forehead, without urinary opening, an increase in the birth-rate of Siamese twins, etc. Some users of contraceptives become permanently barren while their health generally deteriorates. These disadvantages of contraceptive measures clearly indicate that man cannot act against what God has created without self-destruction.

Lentsoane has indicated that in a family where there are no children there is no pleasure. Such spouses are always at logger-heads with each other with the result that they are likely to divorce. A family that lacks some worldly treasures may enjoy peace of mind only if it can be blessed with a single child, particularly a boy to prove that a child is a treasure in every family.

## **2.5 Divorce**

Divorce is an integral part of themes of Love and Family Life. Divorce is one of the most crucial causes that force children to roam the streets and to be abused sexually. There is a high rate of divorce between old and particularly newly-wed partners today. It has become so common that the public views spouses whose marriages last relatively longer with scepticism. This high rate of divorce has become a matter of serious concern

to parents, social workers, courts of law and society in general to such an extent that many young people view marriage as a dreadful nightmare. Lentsoane has, therefore, decided to address divorce by pinpointing its causes and consequences so that everyone should mend one's ways in preparation for entering matrimony freely and guard against its collapse.

Lentsoane is totally opposed to divorce and, further, points out a few of its causes in order to caution some people who may unconsciously fall prey to it. In lines 1-3 of the second stanza of the poem "*Boa moratiwa*" (Come Back Darling), the poet cites over-drinking of intoxicants as a cause of divorce when he says:

*Maloba ke be ke fahlilwe,*

*Ke bušwa ke tshehlana' mabele*

*E re go kgabakgaba mpeng, e tšhabešetše hlogong.* (1988:1)

A day before yesterday I had a foreign substance in my eyes,  
Being controlled by the greyish one of corn (beer),  
After simmering in my stomach, it rushed into my head.

The poet employs hyperbolic expressions in lines 1 & 2 of the excerpt above in order to reveal his uncontrollable drinking habits to which he is enslaved. One deduces that a divorcee regrets the effects of such drinking habits which bring about a total loss of sense which leads to immoral behaviour.

If one listens to gossips about one's spouse from friends and foes, the marriage will eventually crumble. The poet points out this cause of divorce in lines 4-7 of the second stanza of "*Boa moratiwa*" (Come Back Darling) thus:

*Ke be ke hlabegilwe ke dipolelo tša mekgotha,*  
*Ke le matheetšabohle,*  
*Ke le senganga,*  
*Ke ipona ke le monnanna. (1988:1)*

I had been influenced by rumours,  
Being the listener-to-all,  
Being the dastard,  
Seeing myself being a real man.

Through careful choice of words such as "*matheetšabohle*" (listener-to-all), "*senganga*" (dastard) and "*monnanna*" (a real man), the poet clearly illustrates the effects of one who accepts misleading information about one's marriage so that it could break down. The poet, therefore, advises everyone to guard against destructive rumours. Wife-battering and insults are causes of divorce. The poet cites these examples in lines 7-9 of the 4th stanza of the same poem. He says:

*Lepara ke lahlile, lešapa ke a le bina,*  
*Ke nyetše boitsholo,*  
*Ke mogatša' Leago. (1988:2)*



I have cast away the staff, I hate an insult.

I have married regret,

I am a spouse to Goodwill.

In the idiomatic expression in line 1 of the extract above, the poet makes everyone aware of the shattering effects of wranglings and grapplings between spouses in their closely-knit family life. Very often one sees people who are involved in such acts resort to self-destruction. In support to this statement, Lentsoane cites an example of his character, Marabe, who commits suicide in *Ga se ya lešaka le* because he fails in his efforts to murder his step-daughter, Kgotlelelo, who becomes a nurse and has just married the medical practitioner, Dr Marema Mothuši, and has all the opportunities of leading a happy and prosperous life (1973:53-54).

A few causes of divorce that Lentsoane has given are enough. In addition to these, there are other causes of divorce that one should mention in passing such as incompatibility between spouses on the basis of their different socio-economic status, one spouse deserts the family out of sexual lust, the reluctance of the husband in maintaining the family, the reluctance to have a common banking account between spouses, etc.

Let us now pay attention to regrettable results of divorce, particularly one that has been pronounced in a court of law between spouses who had been married according to the legal system of Western cultures. Lentsoane exposes a few of such consequences as follows:

A divorced person becomes a laughing-stock. The poet supports this point of view in lines 9-12 of the first stanza of "*Boa moratiwa*" (Come Back Darling) when he says:

*Lehono ke tše di ntlhamile ka kgobogo le lesego,  
Di nkgafetše go bommalelengwana,  
Di mphetotše polelokgoro ya motse,  
Di ntshegiša le dinonyana. (1988:1)*

Today these dressed me with scandal and ridicule,  
They have subjected me to the slanderers.  
They have turned me into the great talk of the village,  
They cause me to be laughed at even by birds.

Through the choice of words such as "*kgobogo*" (scandal), "*lesego*" (ridicule), "*bommalelengwana*" (slanderers) and "*polelokgoro*" (great talk) coupled with the hyperbolic expression in the last line of the excerpt above, the poet has clearly illustrated how every divorcee cannot escape slanderous remarks from the public because one always carries the stigma.

Divorce deprives everyone of the joys of family love and life. The poet cites the example with the husband to Mahlako in the 11th stanza of "*Le hlabile le leso*" (The Dark one has risen) when he says:

*Sobelela Mahlako,*

*Sobelela le matsogo a gago,*  
*Sobelela le botho bja gago,*  
*Go nna go tla šala toro,*  
*Go tla šala bodiidi bja lerato,*  
*Go tla šala bobotlana bja bophelo,*  
*Go tla šala go duma ke sa fetše. (1988:44)*

Disappear Mahlako,  
Disappear with your arms,  
Disappear with your humanity,  
To me will remain the dream,  
There will remain the poverty of love  
There will remain the loneliness of life,  
There will remain never-ending desire.

The poet has employed repetition of the word "*sobelela*" (disappear) in lines 1-3 and of the phrase in the initial stages in lines 5-7 mainly to emphasise that everyone is left in the lurch after divorce. To such a person, life does not only appear like a dream but a dreadful nightmare.

Divorce usually reduces the size of the clan of which it (the clan) is proud. The poet supports this point of view with reference to Batau clan to which he belongs when he says this about a female spouse who has divorced in lines 7 & 8 of the 5th stanza "*Boa moratiwa*" (Come Back Darling):

*E a kotobana kgoro ya Batau,*  
*Ba Masemola ba beile mokganya phatleng. (1988:2)*

It diminishes the kraal of Batau,  
The Masemolas still face the road with expectation.

The poet amplifies and reinforces the same idea in the 12th stanza of "*Le hlabile le leso*"  
(The Dark one has risen) thus:

*Maina ke ao ke tla šalago ke a bitša,*  
*Baarabi ka ba hloka le eja motho.*  
*Fase ke moo ke šometšego,*  
*Kgoro ya babinatau ke yeo ke e kotobantšego,*  
*Bagwera ke bao ke ba fegeleditšego,*  
*Lehono ke fetogile tšhikanoši,*  
*Ke fetogile seswantšho. (1988:44)*

Names are what I shall remain calling,  
Respondents I shall lack in broad day-light.  
I have lost,  
The kraal of lion-totemisers is what I have diminished,  
Friends are those I have taken half-way,  
Today I have become a lone-traveller,  
I have turned into a statue.

A major characteristic of the extract above is sentence-inversion from line 1-5. In ordinary speech one usually says: "*Ke tla šala ke bitša maina*" (I shall remain calling names) while the poet has effected sentence-inversion as follows: "*Maina ke ao ke tla šalago ke a bitša*" (Names are what I shall remain calling). The poet uses sentence-inversion in order to emphasise the state of despair in which a divorcee regrettably finds himself. With the use of the symbols "*tšhikanoši*" (lone-traveller) and "*seswantšho*" (statue), the poet vividly expresses the worthlessness of a divorcee who turns into a mere caricature. Typical of legal provisions of Western cultures, when divorce takes place the guilty person usually loses everything including children. This step becomes a major setback in the life of the divorced person.

Lentsoane points out other consequences of divorce. He illustrates by means of all its consequences that divorce is tantamount to death. That is why some divorcees commit suicide. They are not confident to face reality.

Divorcees, particularly guilty ones, usually plead for reconciliation. Lentsoane illustrates this idea in the last 2 lines of the last stanza of "*Boa moratiwa*" (Come Back Darling):

*Boa moratiwa, boa*

*Boa Pheladi, bophelo bo boe.* (1988:3)

Come back darling, come back,

Come back Pheladi that life may return.

With the repetition of the word "*boa*" (come back), the poet emphatically pleads for reconciliation between spouses which will eventually restore family love and life. When reconciliation fails, one of the spouses in African (particularly Sotho) tradition may sometimes propitiate gods out of frustration with the full hope that they (gods) will definitely plead with God, our saviour, for clemency on his part.

Lentsoane exposes the causes and consequences of divorce in order to elucidate the theme of divorce. Numerous literary devices are employed to achieve this. Among others are sentence-inversion, symbolism, etc. He, therefore, shows that the existence of a complete family does not only symbolise a happy marriage but also a meaningful life.

## 2.6 **Résumé**

Lentsoane realises that love is the corner-stone of family life. All forms of human interaction are basically unthinkable if they are devoid of love. Although many people prefer to stay unmarried today, the poet is mainly opposed to such a state. With the increase of unmarried people, there will be a high rate of unfavourable behaviour in communities and the status of mankind will be reduced to that of animals.

The poet favours marriage which is an institution that God introduced to mankind for the sake of establishing a healthy human-interaction. Marriage keeps the spouses as respectable members of the community that can be exemplary to younger generations. He advocates for mutual love and intermarriages to transcend all artificial barriers.

According to the poet, children are a yard-stick for happy and successful family life and assure the family of its revival. He is, therefore, mainly opposed to family-planning measures that deny someone the right to life.

Lentsoane still regards divorce as taboo among Africans today. He still discourages divorce for the sake of the maintenance of harmonious interhuman relations that are based on love. A peaceful family life assures mankind of a happy community, a happy nation and a happy world society.



## CHAPTER III

### THEMES ON WOMEN

#### 3.0 Introduction

Some European nations colonised Africa during 1880-1890's. Colonialism and its civilising mission had a tremendous influence on the lifestyle of Africans which was subsequently revolutionised. Agents of colonial powers taught Blacks to abhor certain things that were Black, for example, their opinions, words, actions, colour and even culture. Whites judged everything that was originally Black on the basis of their own standards, values and norms, and then eventually found it inadequate as it failed to meet such criteria. To give our discussion substance, we could align ourselves with the views of Ngugi wa Thiongo that are reflected in the newspaper article "*Putting Africa in Perspective*" during his visit in South Africa in August 1991. He asserted:

Art generally is for life and it should be used for the enhancement of those forces which are pro-life. As a result such art has to look negatively at all the forces that prevent the full realisation of life. Literature by writers from our continent has no doubt made outsiders look at Africa in a different way. Colonialism has always tried to uphold a cultural tradition that portrayed African people negatively. African literature has infact tried to correct not only the perception of outsiders, but of Africans themselves who are

made to look at Africa through the eyes of Europe. This literature has contributed to a positive awareness of ourselves as African people and by other people outside the continent (City Press, 25 August 1991:15).

The negative portrayal of Black Africans that resulted from colonialism engendered feelings of inferiority complex. It is the same feeling of inferiority among Africans, particularly African women, that Lentsoane addresses in his poetry.

During colonial rule Black African students were sent to Europe, Britain and America to further their studies as part of a colonising mission. Contact between Black and White artists in these colonial powers proved fruitful and spread cultural influences. The Whiteman's education led towards the cultural assimilation of Black African students who eventually became aliens among the illiterate African masses. For the Black élite, it was difficult to identify with the Africans and their culture who in turn rejected him as "White".

Nationalism developed throughout the world along political and ideological views. As a result of the influences of nationalism, Black African artists formed a Black African Literary movement called Négritude or Négrismo. Négritude started in France (Paris) and USA from whence it spread to Carribea and Africa. Among the proponents of négritude were Marcus Garvey, Cheikh Anta Diop (born 1923) of Senegal, Aimé Césaire (born 1913) of Martinique island, Léopold Sédar Senghor (born 1906) of Senegal, etc. Through négritude, Black African artists reacted against their complete cultural

assimilation by Whites. Négritude was, therefore, an intellectual notion or attitude which desired a return to the "great past" (i.e. African culture and history) and may be well explained as follows:

Négritude implies *inter alia* a re-creation of the past. African authors realize very well that they could hardly succeed in imitating foreign models. They feel that in stressing specific African qualities they can increase the originality of their works and thus be successful in international competition. This standpoint logically results from their approach to their cultural heritage. Traditional material, which is used only as a source of inspiration, should, however, be fused in the process of creation, permitting a higher stage of self-expression (Klíma 1976:68).

Négritude in North America and West Europe gained popularity as Pan-Africanism. Proponents of Pan-Africanism were W.E.B. Du Bois, C. McKay (1860:1947), René Maran (1887-1960), etc. (Klíma 1976:62). These Pan-Africanists asserted their African black pride in literary art as they felt their cultural alienation deep down to the marrow. It is this African nationalism that has prompted Blacks to introspect and attempt to restore their lost cultural heritage on the realisation that a people without culture lack foundation and are susceptible to good and bad cultural influences of other nations.

In their civilising mission, the colonial powers not only laid the basis for economic development, but also educated the Africans in the social and political fields. It is this

type of education that made African women as well aware of their talents and limitations. According to the African culture, women are traditionally symbols of family maintenance and house-keeping. With the passage of time, African women became aware of their responsibilities within communal, national and international affairs. It is for this reason that African women need parity with their male counterparts because God endows everyone with potentials and limitations for specific duties regardless of sex. Women realised they cannot remain subservient to men at all levels of life any longer. To achieve equality, women have formed their own organisations through which they strive for their rights and educate one another.

While the desire among Africans is to see women on an equal footing with males, there are women who go astray. Their forms of deviation and the conditions under which they deviate will be fully addressed in the ensuing discussions. Such women with devious tendencies are a risk to a healthy society. This is the reason why Lentsoane addresses this social problem among women of today in his poetry.

The spirit of African nationalism of the 1960's had a great impact on H.M.L. Lentsoane who composed a number of poems that are based on themes that appertain to women, inter alia: *Black is Beautiful*; *The Modern Woman and her responsibilities*; *The Modern Woman strives for Parity with Men*, and *Malpractices of Devious Women*.

In the following discussions, each of the said themes will be examined in some details and motivated with extracts from the relevant poems of Lentsoane.

### 3.1 Black is Beautiful

The concept "*Black is beautiful*" is synonymous with "*African black pride*". It is an extension of *négritude*. The engineers behind the concept "*Black is beautiful*" were W.E.B. Du Bois, L.S. Senghor, L. Hughes and C. McKay. It was orchestrated in the 1960's in Africa. The concept refers to an intellectual notion or attitude among the Black African élite or artists which was employed as a counter-action against the disintegration of Black African cultural heritage in literary circles during and after European colonial rule. It is a way of yearning for the great past among Black Africans.

Lentsoane has been prompted to write on this theme of black beauty when it was still in vogue. During that period, Blacks suffered from inferiority complex and could not take the initiative and be creative in their undertakings or else those who attempted were discouraged through humiliations, rebukes, arrests, etc. As we have already indicated in the introduction to this chapter, Blacks despised anything that was of Black origin as a result of the misgivings of European colonial rule.

For instance, Lentsoane has fostered the theme "Black is beautiful" among Blacks in his poetry when he observed there are some diffident Black African women who use cosmetics and make-ups so that they could gain light complexion in their strife to look like women of European cultures. He has realised that such African women become elated at their light complexion which at the time was regarded beautiful at the expense of their natural black pigmentation which is equally beautiful.

In an attempt to urge Black women to regain the confidence and love they have lost in their natural ebony skin, Lentsoane has created a vivid picture of African womanhood. In lines 1-6 of the first stanza of his poem "*Barwedi ba Afrika*" (Daughters of Africa), he depicts the origin of their black beauty. He asserts:

*Boswana ke bja Afrika,  
Bja Amerika bo tšwa Afrika.  
Go tloga Egepeta go fihla Kapa,  
Go tloga Tanzania go fihla Zaire,  
Go nkgwa boswana fela,  
Mmala wa Afrika. (1975:40)*

Blackness is of Africa,  
Of America comes from Africa.  
From Egypt to the Cape,  
From Tanzania to Zaire,  
It smacks of blackness only,  
The colour of Africa.

The preponderance of Blacks in Africa is not surprising. Africa is indeed the home-continent of Blacks. With the repetition of the words "*boswana*" (blackness) and "*Afrika*" (Africa) in the quote, the poet emphasises that the black colour is peculiar to the entire African continent which one sees when one traverses it from North to South (along the Egypt-Cape plane) and from East to West (along the Tanzania-Zaire plane). He, further,



reveals that Blacks in other continents, for example, Afro-Americans in America, owe their black colour and pride to their mother-continent, Africa. It is, therefore, abundantly clear that the poet inculcates Black Africans, particularly women, with the sense of pride and confidence in being black, being the indigenous inhabitants of Africa. These reasons are ample proof that Africans have no reason for self-denial and self-rejection about their black colour and identity.

G. Mudzingwa in his poem "The black badge of Africa" concurs with Lentsoane. He gives a vivid picture of a young African boy - as a source of inspiration - who loves his African setting and is proud of his black beauty in lines 5-8 of the last stanza when he says:

I learned to love  
The land that gave me  
My own black badge.  
The black badge of Africa. (1985:13)

S.M. Serudu in *Limi* (1981:99) also addresses the theme of black beauty from the perspective of many writers with whom Lentsoane concurs. He states:

Older poets like Leopold Senghor, have seen and appreciated the beauty of the Black woman. In *Femme noire*, *Femme nue*, Senghor addresses himself to African womanhood.



He maintains that their colour symbolizes life itself, their form is nothing else but beauty which sparkles like jewels and stars on the darkness of their skins.

American writers like Langston Hughes, Jean Toomer and Countee Cullen, seem to share the view of Senghor. They too have tried to show that there was beauty and pride in blackness, in being black and having African as one's ancestors.

From the works of these writers, we can conclude that they appreciate blackness on African women and having Black African ancestry. In the same tone, Lentsoane condemns artificial light complexion on African women in lines 1-3 of his poem "*Bja gago bošwaanyana*" (Your light complexion) when he says:

*Bja gago bošwaanyana ke kotsi,*  
*Bo ikanegile pepeneneng,*  
*Bo bonwa ke mang le mang.* (1988:9)

Your light complexion is danger,  
It has laid itself bear to all,  
It is seen by each and everyone.

Through the use of the metaphor "*Bja gago bošwaanyana ke kotsi*" (Your light complexion is danger) and the idiomatic expression "*Bo ikanegile pepeneneng*" (It has laid itself bear

to all), the poet is explicitly opposed to external beauty based on the lightness of one's complexion. On the contrary, he prefers a kind-hearted Black woman. We deduce from these expressions that Lentsoane believes that appearances are deceptive. He cites the risks that are involved in the admiration of a woman with a light complexion in lines 4-9 of "*Bja gago bošwaanyana*" (Your light complexion) thus:

*Bo a feta, bo a fela,*  
*Bja hlohlorega bokamatlakala a mohlare,*  
*Bja pona bokaletšoba.*  
*O di bone botala Moswana,*  
*Ge a re botse re llela boswana,*  
*Bošwaanyana bo a lahla. (1988:9)*

It passes, it ends,  
It falls like leaves of a tree,  
It withers like a flower.  
The Black sage has long seen through it,  
When he says for beauty we yearn for blackness,  
Light complexion misleads.

To emphasise the transience of beauty marked by lightness of complexion, Lentsoane uses plant images. The images are neatly brought out in the following two similes "*Bja hlohlorega bokamatlakala a mohlare*" (It falls like leaves of a tree) and "*Bja pona bokaletšoba*" (It withers like a flower). Plants that have vitality are characterised by their

glossy green leaves and blossoms. During drought or with the passage of time, the leaves of such plants become yellowish, wither and fall off their trees. The same applies to the petals and corollas of flowers which are attractive during their favourable season, i.e. during Spring but perish with its passage. So it is with lasses with light complexion who only show vitality at an early age of maturity while their faces become pale and spoil their beauty very soon afterwards. In this way, the poet tries to bring to light the disadvantages of light complexion of most Black African women. Some additional shortcomings that are peculiar to some women with light complexion include laziness, wickedness, and callousness. Very often such women are flirts. The majority of them never reject any love-suit, and are causes of clashes between man and man, and woman and woman. These prove that light complexion preferred by some diffident women mars their black beauty which usually lasts for one's life-time rather than one which soon becomes pale and one's face develops wrinkles. Through the aphorism "... *botse re llela boswana/Bošwaanyana bo a lahla*" (... for beauty we yearn for blackness/Light complexion misleads), the poet has emphatically elucidated that black beauty has since long been appreciated and admired by Blacks themselves.

Cosmetics have long been put to a test among Africans. Both males and females use them on their faces so that they can gain light complexion. It has long been discovered that cosmetics contain a very harmful substance called hydroquinone which erodes away the black pigments. Continued use leaves indelible black blotches all over the faces of the users with the result that it mars their black beauty forever. It is for this reason that some individuals and associations campaign against the manufacture and the use of cosmetics among Blacks. This anti-cosmetic campaign is unlikely to succeed because the

manufacturing company is a multi-million rand scheme that enjoys the support of the state in many countries from which the state in turn gains in the form of income tax regardless of its financial and physical exploitation of Blacks. Therefore, many Blacks condemn the manufacture and use of cosmetics among Africans in favour of their natural black beauty. Such Blacks hold the same view with Lentsoane.

Some diffident African women emulate European women as regards their style of attire which is intended to enhance their beauty in the form of light complexion they gained through the use of cosmetics. Lentsoane sharply criticises such African women in lines 3-6 of the last stanza of "*Meaparo ya kgarebe tša sefsa*" (The Mode of Dress of Modern Ladies) thus:

*Meriri ke ya maadingwa,  
Ya dintšhuthu, ya go rwalwa e tlošwa.  
Kgarebe tša sefsa di a makatša,  
Di felela marokgong a makoto, (1975:38)*

Hairs are borrowed,  
Very bushy, those that can be put on and off.  
Modern ladies are surprising,  
They put on bell-bottomed pairs of trousers,

We deduce from the extract above that Lentsoane ridicules the lifestyle of some Black women in their African communities as regards their mode of attire. The poet uses irony

in these expressions "*maadingwa*" (loaned), "*dintšhuthu*" (very big - i.e. grotesque), "... *ya go rwalwa e tlošwa*" (... that can be put on and off), to reveal that such 'hairs' are not natural but artificial. African women waste more money on such capital integuments in order to adorn themselves. The poet is, therefore, opposed to the purchase and wearing of wigs that mar the black beauty of African women. They appear grotesque because they look like European women and, therefore, aliens in their African communities. Some other forms of adornment, perhaps with jewels would be more welcomed on these African women with their natural and well-kept hairs. The poet is, further, embarrassed by African women who wear trousers (i.e. bell-bottomed pairs of trousers and hot-pants) that delineate their figures. According to the African culture, it is a shame to expose the better parts of a woman as an assertion of her womanhood such as the delineation of the size of their buttocks, gorges on the sides of their hips and their private parts, and perhaps a total exposure of a woman's thigh and other parts of her body. To Lentsoane, African women in the said style of attire appear replicas of European women as they are ashamed of their Black African image and culture. Lentsoane, therefore, discourages African women from wearing trousers in the irony he employs in the last two lines of the last stanza of "*Meaparo ya kgarebe tša sefsa*" (The Mode of Dress of Modern Ladies) thus:

*Motho wa gona wa hwetša a hwahwanka*

*Nke o tla tloge a re ke a goroša. (1975:38)*

You will find a person walking haughtily

As if she will soon say I bring the bride home.

The impression we get is that such women are proud of their appearances and always want to be appreciated. The poet also states that such African women who wear trousers, look masculine in appearance and movements because such an attire is foreign to Black African culture. It deprives these women of their feminine character and dignity that their male African counterparts admire.

Lentsoane portrays an example of black beauty that diffident African women should admire and emulate. These physical features that are peculiar to African womanhood are some of those which symbolise black beauty as he points out in the second stanza of the poem "*Barwedi ba Afrika*" (Daughters of Africa). They have sharp-pointed noses, glossy white teeth that match their dark complexion, big bright eyes, well-groomed hairs, etc. It is on the basis of such features that the poet emphasises that African women owe their black beauty to their ancestors (gods). It is along these lines that the poet makes African women aware of their black beauty with which they must be complacent. Their male counterparts appreciate and admire them in their natural appearances. This view is emphasised in lines 10-12 of the last stanza of the same poem when he says:

*Lemogang barwedi ba Afrika,  
Boswana ke bjo bo botse,  
Ke bjo bo botse mahlong a rena Ma-Afrika. (1974:41).*

Take note daughters of Africa,  
Black is beautiful,  
It is beautiful in the eyes of we, Africans.



The Northern Sotho term "*boswana*" (blackness) refers to black beauty. The poet employs oblique linking in the repetition of the expression "*Ke bjo bo botse*" (It is beautiful) in lines 2 & 3 of the quote. Through this oblique linking, the poet lays stress on the beauty of the entire African culture and on being a Black African. In line 1 of the same excerpt, he sounds a warning to African women to stop marring their black beauty through the use of cosmetics, make-ups, the wearing of wigs and trousers of different designs, etc. as if their male counterparts do not admire them. He points out that these African women should realise that their natural black beauty satisfies their male counterparts in the expression "*Ke bjo bo botse mahlong a rena Ma-Afrika*" (It is beautiful in the eyes of we, Africans). To the poet, being a Black African is, therefore, not inferior or unrivalled on earth. This sums up the literary and cultural notion that black is indeed beautiful.

### 3.2 The Modern Woman and her Responsibilities

Another theme that appertains to women is on the modern woman and her responsibilities. African women are not only symbols of black beauty but of family care as well. Although one admits that some modern African women become increasingly irresponsible due to influences of Western cultures, one is still delighted that others still take heed of their family and social responsibilities.

The African woman of today is torn between two contrasting forces - negligence and responsibility. One observes that some African women are still dedicated in playing family and social roles such as the provider role, housekeeper, child care, socialisation



(of both boys and girls), therapeutics, sexual, recreation, and the kinship role as delineated by Nye and Gecas (Bahr 1977:2). Some other social roles include community development or nation-building through educational, health, cripple-care projects and home industries. The modern African woman participates ably in such family and social roles. In support to this statement, we exemplify with the female character, *Modiitšana* (The Pauper), which is also the title of the same poem in which Lentsoane portrays her.

The poet describes how a woman whose husband deserts the family on the grounds of his failure to maintain it, independently tries to cater for its needs. She strives to feed, dress and house children, i.e. enactment of the provider role. This proves that the modern African woman can also become a breadwinner.

Lentsoane wishes the modern African woman good luck so that her struggle for keeping the family fire burning should be crowned with success. This view is expressed in the 6th stanza of the poem "*Modiitšana*" (The Pauper). He states:

*Bona ba ba go sehlefala difahlego,  
Ba go palega melongwana,  
A ga se bona baetapele ba ka moso?  
A ga se bona bagale ba bosasa? (1975:9)*

These ones with dry faces,  
With chapped lips,  
Are they not leaders of tomorrow?  
Are they not heroes of tomorrow?

The socio-economic status of the said family is apparent in the quote. The use of the images "*sehlefala difahlego*" (dry faces) and "*palega melongwana*" (chapped lips) implies this African family is destitute and, therefore, belongs to the low socio-economic class - hence the appearance of the children that this deserted African woman maintains, evinces that basic food and ordinary moisturising skin ointments or lotions, e.g. vaseline, are a luxury instead of a necessity in the family. In the last two lines of the same extract, Lentsoane uses repetition of the initial rhyme scheme coupled with rhetorical questions. In these poetic devices, the poet lays stress on the optimism of this poor African woman who cherishes hope that some day her children will be mature, be able to fend for themselves and others. With the description of the pauper's children in lamentable conditions, the poet reveals through the symbols "*baetapele*" (leaders) and "*bagale*" (heroes) that more often than not, prominent figures in a society emerge from families of a low socio-economic status. If the dreams of this African woman become a reality, she will definitely have beaten not only her run-away husband but many men and married couples in bringing up children irrespective of how terrible circumstances might have been within the family where she strives alone.

In his verse "*Bahlatswadiaparo*" (Washer-women), Lentsoane depicts how some African women toil and moil in towns and cities throughout the Republic of South Africa hoping to look after their families as breadwinners. He illustrates this idea by citing examples of these women who are domestic servants to Whites in Johannesburg in lines 10-14. He says:

*Go tšhitšhila basadi,*

*Ba tekateka mebileng,  
Dihlogong ba swareleditše thaba' diaparo.  
Ba rwele tše tšhweu tša Ditšhweu,  
Ba kgapha dikudumela. (1975:36)*

There trudge women,  
They stagger in the streets,  
On their heads they hold tight a mountain  
of clothes.  
Carrying white ones of Whites.  
Wiping off sweat.

The excerpt above abounds with imagery of hard labour. In lines 1 & 2 of the extract, the poet uses well-chosen words such as "*tšhitšhila*" (trudge) and "*tekateka*" (stagger) which signify the slow movement of these African domestic servants. Such slow and staggering movements of domestic servants, as are often seen in the streets of cities, result from and are commensurate with hard labour that occurs with huge workloads of manual labour that are well described in the hyperbole "*thaba' diaparo*" (a mountain of clothes). The poet goes further to point out the people for whom domestic servants work in the expression "...*tše tšhweu tša Ditšhweu*" (... white ones of Whites). This expression signifies that these African women are servants of White masters (*Ditšhweu*) who like to put on clean clothes (*tše tšhweu*- i.e. white ones). The last line "*Ba kgapha dikudumela*" (Wiping off sweat) is an expression with pastoral connotations. It implies that African women, like any other person, eat food for which they sweat. We therefore realise that

these African women labour for their White masters in anticipation of payment. In this manner, these African women fulfil their provider role as domestic workers, thus they bring up leaders for the African communities.

The poet praises and encourages African women to keep on working hard so that they may enjoy the fruits of their labour later. This view is expressed in lines 18-21 of the same poem. He asserts:

*Bommadithoto ba Soweto, re le rolela dikuane,  
Re itiantšha matolo ge re le bona  
Gobane matsogong a lena go tšwele dinaledi,  
Go sa tla tšwa mahlasedi. (1975:36)*

Load-carriers of Soweto, we doff our hats for you,  
Our knees quiver when we see you  
Because from your hands emerged stars,  
There will emerge sun-beams.

The phrase "*Bommadithoto ba Soweto, ...*" (Load-carriers of Soweto, ...) implies that the African women who are diligent domestic servants in Johannesburg live in Soweto township. The poet implicitly states in the idioms: "*... re le rolela dikuane*" (... we doff our hats for you) and "*Re itiantšha matolo ge re le bona*" (Our knees quiver when we see you) that everyone is, therefore, bound to respect and honour these women for their courage and diligence. The fact that the work of these African women is usually crowned with

success is reflected in the last 2 lines of the quote. These women bring up and contribute a variety of good quality leaders which is implied in "*dinaledi*" (stars) and "*mahlasedi*" (sun-beams) which are images that have connotations of light. Lentsoane depicts how some African women bring up their children who may ultimately assume their rightful place in society as leaders in various spheres. Such African women are good examples in the upbringing of children.

We realise that African women who apparently perform negligible or insignificant work, make a great contribution in bringing up future leaders irrespective of the trials and tribulations they face in life. The role that such women play supports the Northern Sotho adage "*Mmagongwana o swara thipa ka bogaleng*" (The mother usually grabs the knife at its sharp end). The same proverb illustrates the courage women have in bringing up their children especially when their husbands leave them (women) in the lurch. With reference to the extracts of Lentsoane's poems, one infers that some African women show more responsibility than their male counterparts in the up-bringing of children.

When we look at the wide spectrum of community development or nation-building, we realise that women still take the lead in their organisations. There are numerous women's organisations such as The Black Housewives League of South Africa, Women's Care Groups and other task forces which have a major purpose of nation-building that varies in activities such as the erection of crèches and pre-schools that are necessary for the care of children during the day when their mothers go to work and the beginning of children's literacy programme, look after the health of the community by encouraging the establishment of vegetable gardens, poultry and pig farms, for example, that are necessary

for provision of a balanced diet, for commercial gains, etc. In some communities, women together with their male counterparts have on several occasions become members of some committees or task forces that raise donations for the supply of water and electricity. These are some of the social responsibilities for modern African women as regards nation-building.

### **3.3 The Modern Woman Strives for Parity with Men**

Another theme that is related to women is that the modern woman strives for parity with men. The subordination of women among Africans is as old as mankind. This is attributable to some factors, for example, that the marital power structure, family and societal power structures are male-dominated. In most cases, within and without the home, a word from a woman was disapproved of because of her feminine character. With the passage of time, the attitudes of the males towards women had to change due to pressure that Women's Movement Groups exerted. To counteract such perpetual subordination of women, they (women) had long started a campaign for their liberation and marital equality in USA through Women's Movement Groups as R.F.S. Bahr (1977:1) asserts:

There have been advocates for women's rights throughout much of the history of the United States. Some have worked under the assumption that women are more sympathetic, kind, or humane than men and thus, if permitted equal social power, they would clean up politics and improve society generally. Another



perspective maintains that women should be allowed "equality" with men because they are in fact equal in intelligence, stamina, health, and dedication. Recent literature is replete with commentary on the inequality that women suffer under male domination, especially in the occupational world (Bird 1970, de Beauvoir 1953, Friedan 1963, Flexner 1959, Glazer-Malbin and Washer 1972).

The activities of the Women's Movement Groups have led to the rise of two women's movements: the women's liberation groups and the women's rights groups. Women's liberation groups generally concern themselves with cultural norms that relate to male-female interaction and how these norms may be demeaning or disadvantageous to women. Women's rights groups are more concerned with legal questions relating to male-female equality in employment and under the law (Bahr 1977:6).

Although these Women's Movement Groups were met with negative attitude to wherever they spread their mission, women succeeded in getting rid of excessive male domination (i.e. achievement of women's liberation) and achieving not only marital equality within the family but also equality or parity in political, educational, occupational (including salaries) and social spheres.

Modern African women do not only compete their male counterparts in the management of their families, they even excel in communal and national affairs that appertain to leadership since these associations of women have strongly opposed the use of sexist



language, reservation of jobs on the basis of sex, etc. and, further, advocate freedom of women and equality in all domestic and external affairs.

In his poem "*Ga di wele ka mo gobe*" (They do not fall into trouble), Lentsoane points out that women show capabilities and talents through which they gain recognition for their prominence with regard to political leadership. Among such efficient women there are Indira Ghandi of India, Golda Meir of Israel and Bandaranaike of Sri-Lanka as Members of Parliament and Premiers. There are also African chieftainesses such as Thorometšane Dinkwanyane, Mankopodi Thulare and Modjadji (the chieftainess who is famous for rain-making which is a providential talent) among Bapedi cultural group. He, further, points out that during the rule of these women, their subjects enjoyed peace and stability in the form of happiness, satisfaction, mutual understanding and love. The leadership of these African women disproves the veracity of the Northern Sotho aphorism: "*Tša etwa ke ya tshadi pele di wela ka mo gobe*" (Being led by the female, they go astray). Some women can, therefore, lead one to green pastures in their strife for parity with men (1975:42-43).

The success of the women, as the foregoing paragraph shows, clearly proves that women can compete their male counterparts in all spheres of life. By citing these exemplary women, Lentsoane advises African women to strive for recognition and leadership in all spheres of life as is the case in 11-14 lines of the last stanza in "*Ga di wele ka mo gobe*" (They do not fall into trouble) when he says:

*Swarang le tiiše basadisadi,*

*Hlahlang ka mahlahla le bohlale,*  
*Mehla ga e sa le ya maabane,*  
*Lefase ke la mang le mang. (1975:43)*

Keep it up real women,  
Lead with enthusiasm and wisdom,  
Days are no longer of yesterday,  
The world belongs to each and everyone.

Lentsoane has explicitly emphasised the need for good leadership among modern African women. Good leadership is usually judged on the basis of its fruits. With the use of the compound noun "*basadisadi*" (real women) it is evident that the poet congratulates modern African women on their good quality of leadership and, therefore, regards them in high esteem. The poet, further, ascribes the good leadership of modern African women to certain human qualities such as "*mahlahla*" (enthusiasm or courage) and "*bohlale*" (wisdom) that are priorities. In the past, wisdom in leadership was regarded as an attribute of men only as the poet asserts in "*Mehla ga e sa le ya maabane*" (Times have changed) and therefore, this notion no longer holds. Today there are women, who are as wise as men are or even wiser than men, who can feature well in all spheres of life as regards leadership. Discrimination based on sex as regards leadership is a thing of the past.

In support of the last statement of the paragraph supra, we could refer to S.M. Serudu who illustrates that leadership qualities are not only given to people of a particular sex

or of a particular socio-economic status, etc. but it is a universal phenomenon to mankind. In his work, S.M. Serudu (1987:331) says this about leadership:

Leadership is an inborn trait which can be developed to a higher level. People who do not have this gift from God may never attain the highest degree of leadership. Communities which thrived and prospered yesterday, and thrive and prosper today, depend on good leadership. Leadership is not a heritage of members of the royal family, on the contrary, it is a gift given to man by God so that man can guide his fellow-men. Very often a man from an ordinary family is endowed with extra-ordinary powers of leadership.

If all women, particularly of African descent, could follow suit in the examples of those Lentsoane names, we would all advance to the level of other nations of the world. However, one should not lose sight of the group of African women who neglect their responsibilities, who do not deserve parity with men and then drag Africans paces behind their era as it is reflected in the ensuing discussions.

### **3.4 Malpractices of Devious Women**

The last theme on women relates to malpractices of devious African women in society today. While the desire among Africans is to see women on an equal footing with males, there are women who go astray. The fact is: there are responsible and negligent people

in every normal society. The same universal truth holds for some African women who become social deviants. These are, for example, women who indulge in sexual escapades, those who abort, those who abandon children, those who resort to heavy drinking, etc. Conditions under which these women misbehave are, inter alia: their sexual lust, the death of their husbands, due to migratory labour, attempts to procure money for maintenance of their children, attempts to escape real life problems through fantasy, etc. Such women with devious tendencies are a risk to a healthy society - hence Lentsoane discourages such forms of misconduct in his poetry.

Lentsoane expresses public concern and worry about some African women who indulge heavily in intoxicants. Before we embark on the dangers of drunkenness, let us trace the possible causes of such deviation. Some women over-drink because they regard beer as some form of entertainment through which they escape from reality into the world of fantasy, intoxicating drinks have socialising effects in the sense that they (women) may make friendship with men and other women, intoxicating drinks serve as a means of relief from physical and mental stress due to hard labour or personal and domestic pressures.

In "*Khumagadi meetseng*" (Ladies in water), Lentsoane exposes such African women who compete their male counterparts in uncontrollable drinking habits. These women are usually either misled by the fact that according to the African tradition they are brewers of beer or they emulate women of European cultures. The poet points out that such women become tramps by drinking heavily as is shown in lines 11-14 of the first stanza when he says:

*E a paratla thaka' khumagadi,*  
*Mokgopu ga e o bone.*  
*Lebotlelo e a le kgonamiša,*  
*La šala le ahlamile. (1975:39)*

They drink the women-folk,  
They do not see a beer-calabash.  
A bottle is turned upside-down,  
It is left empty.

The fact that modern African women abuse intoxicating drinks is apparent right from the first line throughout the entire excerpt. The concept "*thaka' khumagadi*" (women-folk) is comprehensive. It suggests that the majority of women, irrespective of age, abuse intoxicating drinks. Through his choice of words, the poet uses imagery that has connotations of over-drinking in these terms: "*paratla*" (drink), "*kgonamiša*" (turn over) and "*ahlamile*" (empty). The use of "*mokgopu*" (beer-calabash) and "*lebotlelo*" (bottle) as containers of beer are images that suggest that modern African women are not selective. They mix beer of African and European cultures which, further, suggests abuse of intoxicating drinks. The use of these images suggests that these African women are not only social drinkers but drunkards or alcoholics to whom drunkenness becomes their normal way of life. Such women seem to disregard the adverse effects of intoxicating drinks on their health and black beauty.

Lentsoane advises African women of today against disadvantages of abusing liquor and lack of selectivity from the 10-14th lines of the second stanza of the same poem such as: dilation of the pupils of one's eyes which causes poor eye-sight, discolouration of one's face, emaciation, neglect of one's family, divorce, frustration, etc. All these disadvantages are a menace to African women who go astray by drinking to their point of saturation. These actions clearly prove the poet right in his examination of the theme of malpractices of devious African women (1975:39).

Another premise that arouses public concern appertains to women who commit abortion. Such women usually engage in promiscuous actions because of mob-influence and their deplorable drinking habits. When they become pregnant these women don't welcome such pregnancies, they feel deprived of pleasure (nice-time), apart from being scared they feel the burden of maintaining such fatherless children. Their only option is to commit abortion.

Abortion is another way in which modern African women show deviation. In lines 9-12 of the verse "*Mo tlogele a phele*" (Let him live), Lentsoane reprimands one woman, who has conceived a baby, to stop abortion when he says:

*O tsebile mathomo le mafelelo,  
Bjale o reng nke ke gona o phafogang?  
Mmakgakanego, mo tlogele a itele,  
Mo tlogele a phele. (1975:23)*



You knew the beginning and the end,  
Why does it seem you are becoming alert?  
Mmakgakanego (The frustrated one), let him come,  
Let him live.

We gather from the quote that the consequences of promiscuity are a bitter pill to swallow. In her character, Mmakgakanego (Mother-of-frustration, i.e. the frustrated one), the poet portrays a frustrated woman representative of those who never shoulder responsibility regarding the consequences of their promiscuous actions. Such women have a full fore-knowledge of all the consequences of promiscuity as the poet explicitly states in line 1 thus: "*O tsebile mathomo le mafelelo*" (You knew the beginning and the end). The use of the rhetorical question "*Bjale go reng nke ke gona o phafogang?*" (Why does it seem you are becoming alert?) suggests embarrassment on the part of such women as if it is only after the fruits of their actions that these African women become aware - hence the name "Mmakgakanego" (The frustrated one). Through the repetition of the phrase "*mo tlogele*" (let him) coupled with his choice of words "*itlele*" (come on his own accord) and "*phele*" (live) in which he effected end-rhyme in lines 3 & 4, the poet emphasises that everyone like a new born baby has the right to life. He, further, sounds a warning that these unscrupulous women be courageous in facing the reality of life and should, therefore, stop their anti-human, anti-Christian and anti-God activities because these innocent babies have the right to live. Thus, Lentsoane elucidates the theme on malpractices of devious African women.



Such African women disregard the dangers of abortion. Apart from endangering the lives of their male counterparts, the health of such abortionists deteriorates. Some of them become barren because abortion may damage their wombs while others may even die.

Women who throw away their babies are another premise which Lentsoane brings to the attention of the reader. Among the causes of such unscrupulous actions there are prostitutions, failure to maintain the fatherless child, deprivation of entertainment, etc.

Lentsoane addresses this problem of women who throw away their babies in his poem "*Moeng-mofsa wa Batho*" (The New Arrival). He is scared of seeing a naked child who is abandoned alive in lines 5-8 of the first stanza when he says:

*Legogwa la lona ke bošweu,  
Ke tšhwaane yeo e tonyago.  
Kobo ya lona ke maru le phefo,  
Mmeleng ke hlapi. (1975:25)*

Its mat is whiteness,  
It is a cold frost.  
Its clothes are clouds and wind,  
On the body it is fish (That is, it is naked).

The abandonment and nakedness of the child are subtly expressed in the extract. Imagery abounds through the use of metaphors. The images that bear commutations of

bedding material are "*bošweu*" (whiteness), "*tšhwaane*" (frost) which suggest "*legogwa*" (mat) on which the forsaken child should lie, and "*maru*" (clouds) and "*phefo*" (wind) which also amount to "*kobo*" (clothes, i.e blankets). Apart from bringing forth the conception of bedding material, these images suggest the Winter season during which many living organisms wither and perish. The use of the metaphor "*Mmeleng ke hlapi*" (On the body it is fish) implicitly states that the forsaken child is totally naked. We, therefore, learn that this naked child is not only left at the mercy of nature for its survival but to languish in extremes of weather. Women do not throw away babies during a particular season only but throughout the year.

Lentsoane, therefore, appeals to the public in general to act firmly against ruthless women who throw away babies or to save the lives of such forsaken children in lines 6-10 of the second stanza of the same poem thus:

*A re mo emaemeleng moeng-mofsa yo,  
Mogongwe ke yona naledi ya ka moso,  
Ke yena Nkrumah o mongwe  
Ke yena mophološi,  
Moše wa Baswana. (1975:25)*

Let us stand firm for this new arrival,  
Perhaps he is the star of tomorrow,  
He is another Nkrumah,

He is a saviour,  
Moses of Blacks.

In this quote the poet expresses a general human concern about the loss of future leaders and a wish that communities should join efforts in their rescue. Attempts to ensure the security of the forsaken child are explicit in line 1 when the poet says: "*A re mo emaemeleng moeng-mofsa yo*" (Let us stand firm for this new arrival). The term "*emaemela*" (repeatedly stand for) suggests a general notion of taking care of the abandoned baby. The same notion covers rescuing the baby from death, providing it with food and clothes, satisfying its need for comfort and solace, and finally trying to trace the whereabouts of the mother who should also be brought to book. The poet alludes to the loss of future leaders as a result of the abandonment of babies in the phrase "... *naledi ya ka moso*" (... the star of tomorrow). A star is a celestial body that reflects its light from the sun and provides a dim light at night. This image of a star gives hope of guidance or leadership to the old and young by the time the abandoned and rescued child becomes an adult. The poet reinforces the concept of good quality leaders through these images: "... *Nkrumah yo mongwe*" (... another Nkrumah), "*mophološi*" (saviour) and "*Moše wa Baswana*" (Moses of Blacks). Dr Kwane Nkrumah was a Ghanaian who advocated Pan Africanism - the spirit of nationalism that led to the freedom of almost all African states from colonial rule. The conception of a saviour induces one to imagine the spiritual leadership of Jesus Christ among Christians while Moses was a leader that God sent to free the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. The three prominent figures mentioned here are celebrities of good leadership that humanity once perceived. If all the abandoned children could be rescued before they languish, the

poet feels the envisaged leadership would be accomplished. Africans have lost and still lose future leadership through the actions of these ruthless women. Children are needed for continuity of the human generations and their delivery, particularly Blacks, from illiteracy, ignorance, deprivation, hunger, oppression, etc.

### 3.5 **Résumé**

Devious African women who drink heavily, commit abortion and throw away babies in favour of flirting and entertainment should emulate "*Modiitšana*" (The Pauper), domestic servants in "*Bahlatswadiaparo*" (Washerwomen) and all those who are cited in "*Ga di wele ka mo gobe*" (They do not fall into trouble) as exemplary instances of good leadership with regard to nation-building which Lentsoane advocates.

Lentsoane shows the constructive effects of the women's liberation movement in changing the lifestyle of African women. He portrays the modern African woman as a member of a broader structure of women as regards role-play in various spheres of life for purposes of communal, nation and international advancement. He, further, reveals that God has endowed women with the necessary talent to compete or excel their male counterparts, and that there is no longer any reason for discriminating against or oppressing women.

Lentsoane advocates for the recognition of women's rights and the liberation of women from high-handed husbands, communities and states under the rule of male chauvinists. The entire world would be progressive in all matters if women could be free to

participate at all levels of decision-making and executive bodies.

Lentsoane is a purist as regards traditional African lifestyle. While he favours the assimilation of some European customs, he dislikes those which corrupt African cultures. His poetry serves as some form of social and political censure.

## CHAPTER IV

### THEMES ON SOCIAL PROBLEMS

#### 4.0 Introduction

Changes in the history of Africans have also affected their mode of existence throughout Africa and the entire world. These changes give rise to three major periods in the history of Africans, viz. Pre-Colonial Era, Colonial and Post-Colonial Eras. Prior to the Colonial Era, the life of Africans was characterised by traditional values and a unique lifestyle. The economic system of all Africans was based on African Socialism or Black Communalism which is explained as "a philosophy of sharing characteristic of black people throughout the world" (Motlhabi 1984:124).

The traditional African social system was a just one, because it was organised along collective and communal lines. Although one cannot overrule class-distinctions between the aristocracy and the peasantry in each tribe or community during this Pre-Colonial era, it mainly consisted of producers or workers who concertedly engaged in agricultural activities, hunting, craftwork and bartering (Ncube 1985:1).

Under African Socialism, these factors of production: land and labour, belonged to the tribe as a whole. The tribe owned the land, grazed livestock and lived on soil as one collective group. The tribe enjoyed equitable distribution of agricultural products among its members inasmuch as productive relations were governed by a philosophy of

egalitarianism. Since this system was an attempt to satisfy security, hunger, etc. there were very few social problems at the time.

With the advent of Western Civilisation during and after the Colonial Eras, communities adopted the concept of private ownership and control of land and property which is based on the principles of a "free enterprise society" namely profit motive, competition, consumerism and individualism thus creating two more class distinctions from the peasantry, viz. the rich middle-class (bourgeoisie-type) and the poor working-class. This spirit of capitalism has given rise to various and complicated social problems peculiar to it, such as all evils that are related to money or unequal distribution of wealth, juvenile delinquency, abuse of intoxicating drinks and drugs, child-abuse, etc.

Lentsoane has, therefore, gathered his poetic material from his experiences about some topical social problems. Such topical social problems need immediate attention lest the younger generation regard it as an integral part of life. Among such topical issues, the poet has culled the following themes: *Money is the Source of Evil*; *Juvenile Delinquency in Modern Societies*; *Abuse of Intoxicating Drinks* and *Child-sex Abuse*. These four themes are discussed in their sequence.

#### 4.1 **Money is the Source of Evil**

The first theme under scrutiny that appertains to social problems is: *Money is the source of evil*. This theme is examined against the background of industrial developments in various countries in the world. Before manufacturing industries could develop well



throughout the world, human life was simple regarding the requirements for sustenance. Mankind could cultivate some crops, could gather wild fruits and hunt wild animals that were plenty for subsistence. Money was unknown.

The rise of manufacturing industries brought about drastic changes with regard to lifestyle which is now complex and expensive. Mankind coined money that has come to be used as a major determinant of value on marketable commodities. Money has now become an indispensable possession. Lentsoane expresses this view aptly in his poem "*Tšhelete*" (Money). He states:

*Ke kgomo sedišwa ka mainaina,  
Kgomo sehloka dinaka le mokgopa,  
Kgomo sedišwa ke thak'a khumagadi,  
Kgomo sedišwa ke banna  
Segorošwa ke thaka e tshesane,  
Segorošwa le ke batšofadi. (1971:27)*

It is a beast looked after in names,  
A beast without horns and skin,  
A beast looked after by womenfolk,  
A beast looked after by men  
Something driven home by youngsters,  
Something driven home even by the aged.

The fact that money is an invaluable possession is apparent in the quote. The poet repeatedly employs a metaphor that conjures an image of cattle through the use of "*kgomo*" (beast) in lines 1-4 and his choice of words that have pastoral connotations such as "*sedišwa*" (something looked after) and "*segorošwa*" (something driven home) in an attempt to emphasise the love for money and the significance thereof to mankind. To substantiate this point, the poet points out in line 1 thus "*Ke kgomo sedišwa ka mainaina*" (It is a beast looked after in names). Apart from several names that people of different cultural groups have given to money, there are numerous stylistic references to money, inter alia: "barks", "clipper" (R100-00 i.e. 10 x R10.00 bank-notes clipped together), "*lebele*" (a grain of corn), "*lebotha*" (a bulk of bank-notes), "*bolotsi*" (many coins), etc. Such nomenclatures relating to money are peculiar to Tsotsi language. The metaphor "*Ke kgomo sehloka dinaka le mokgopa*" (It is a beast without horns and skin) suggests that no man can be regarded as being wealthy on the basis of having a lot of money unless it is turned into property. Money circulates among people. If one becomes broke, no one can find its traces to show that one once had a lot of money. When a beast is long dead, its owner looks for it and identifies it by its remains such as horns and skin. This is not the case with a miser. It is like the sage says "*Tšhelete ga e na morole*" (Money has no kraal manure). With a man who once had a huge livestock, we may still see the heap of kraal manure. The poet, further, points out everyone, e.g. women, men, the young and the old, wish to hoard money for oneself. He compares the indispensability of money today with that of cattle - the traditional wealth of Blacks. For instance, a male African who had a herd of cattle deserved the status of the king. Such a man enjoyed many advantages over his male contemporaries such as these: he could marry many wives and bear many children that he could maintain with meat, milk, cultivate crops and other

agricultural products, provide his family with hide as blankets for use at night, etc. Today money has the same value as that livestock, particularly cattle, had in the tribe in the past.

Although everyone is fully aware of the value of money in our world today, it is not without its demerits. Such demerits crop up as proof of the theme that money is the source of evil. Lentsoane brings out this idea in the 4th stanza of "*Tšhelete*" (Money) thus:

*Ke sehvirihwiri phehli sefehlatho,  
Moferekanyi motlišadillo lefaseng,  
E ba bolaile matswalo bana ba batho,  
Ya ba fetoša phiri tše di tlerenyago,  
Ba jana ba tsebana e le molokomong  
Ba fetšana ta! (1971:27)*

It is the crook the trouble-maker who troubles people,  
The Instigator who causes misery on earth,  
It has deadened the consciences of people,  
It has turned them into prowling hyenas,  
They prey on one another though they are kin  
They exterminate one another!

Metaphors abound in the extract above. In lines 1 & 2 the poet employs images that are associated with trouble-making through the use of words like: "*sehvirihwiri*" (crook), "*phehli*" (trouble-maker), "*sefehl batho*" (one who troubles people), "*moferekanyi*" (instigator) and "*motlišadillo*" (one who causes misery). The effect of these images is to stress that money causes ill-feelings among people. Money tempts people, particularly criminals, to behave like marauding beasts, "*Phiri tšeo di tlerenyago*" (prowling hyenas), by tearing their fellow human-beings to pieces. In trying to eke a livelihood such criminals are ruthless and callous like the poet says "*E ba bolaile matswalo bana ba batho*" (It has deadened consciences of people). Money changes one's personality to a great extent. The lust for money can drive one to get it by fair and foul means. More often than not one does resort to evil or dishonest measures which the poet expresses in his choice of reciprocal words: "*jana*" (prey on one another) and "*fetšana*" (exterminate one another), and the onomatopoeic word "*ta!*" (completely) which imply people murder one another because of money. The poet aptly elucidates the theme that money is the source of evil.

Evil manifests itself in many forms, inter alia, fraud, murder, robbery, etc. with serious consequences on human life. Evil and unpleasant experience occasioned by money will be addressed in details in the ensuing discussions.

For instance, in lines 4-8 of the 5th stanza of the poem "*Labohlano*" (Friday), Lentsoane clearly illustrates the man-to-man violence which is caused by man's desire to procure more money for himself. Such incidents are prevalent in the townships especially on Fridays which are usually pay-days for workers. He states:

*Di a gagola diphiri,*  
*Di tlerola dikwanyana,*  
*Dipotla di a hlanolwa*  
*Banna ba hlaba phooko*  
*Ba ithwala megono. (1971:31)*

They do tear hyenas,  
They tear lambs,  
Pockets are turned inside out  
Men wet themselves  
And cry helplessly.

The stanza above shows the impact of man's love for money on his fellowmen. The poet captures the activities of urban man on his fellowmen on Fridays through the use of apt images. Such bloody and tragic activities in metropolitan areas confirm that the law of the jungle which states: "Hunt or you will be hunted, kill or you will be killed, and eat or you will be eaten" is applicable on pay-days when only the fittest survive. In line 1 of the quoted stanza he creates an image of a marauding beast. In Northern Sotho the hyena (*phiri*) is associated with death. To refer to human-beings as vicious hyenas implies that man has been so affected by his love for money that he is no better than an animal. Man's ruthlessness is further enhanced by the image of a lamb (*kwanyana*) torn to pieces by hyenas. Note the force, brutality and ruthlessness contained in the word "*tlerola*" literally meaning tearing to pieces. The quickness of the action of robbing the victims is clearly brought out in the line "*Dipotla di a hlanolwa*" (Pockets are turned inside out).

The victims are not only caught unawares but are also threatened and terrified so much so that they become helpless and extremely frightened. If a man wets himself (*a hlaba phooko*) then it is obvious that he is subjected to great pressure and threatened with death. In Northern Sotho a man is regarded as a lamb, he never cries loudly even when subjected to severe pain. Yet, the criminals in this instance are so ruthless that man fails to keep his manhood. He whimpers like a child - *Ba ithwala megono*. This expression implies crying miserably owing to lack of help or when he has sustained a severe loss.

Lentsoane exposes some evil consequences of money from the 6th to the last stanza of "*Tšhelete*" (Money). In order to avoid paraphrasing these stanzas, one should just give a résumé of such consequences: Money leads towards the collapse of many social institutions such as burial societies, business enterprises, co-operatives, financial institutions, etc. Some major causes in the disintegration of these institutions are poor management, advertent fraud among leaders, poor safe-keeping methods, etc.

Money strains all human relationships. Lentsoane reveals some nasty conditions that prevail in some families or homes on pay-days. Parents wrangle and grapple over money while children listen and watch in dismay. Such conflicts over money result in broken families. Human relations become estranged because money causes mutual mistrust between husbands and wives, kings and subjects, etc.

Money is the major cause of crime. Criminals e.g. murderers, robbers, etc. become imprisoned as the state takes rehabilitative and punitive measures. Money also causes



drug and alcohol abuse among frustrated youths and adults, especially pupils and the aged. Drug and alcohol abuse have harmful effects on the individual.

In another poem entitled "*Mošupologo*" (Monday), the poet points out some evil consequences of money, e.g. reluctance to rise among workers, trudging to work, suffering from hang-over, sustaining injuries, being penniless and hungry, etc. that arise on 'blue' Mondays. In the 8th line of the last stanza the poet states:

*Morutiši o nyaka tša mmušo wa gagwe* (1971:10)

The teacher demands his work.

In the line quoted above, the poet illustrates the difficult circumstances under which authorities and subjects find themselves in their respective working situations. For instance, conflict usually arises between the teachers and pupils irrespective of sex, employer and employee, etc. for the sake of output. Authorities set standards that their subjects or employees should strive to satisfy. Owing to hang-overs that are consequences of alcohol and drug abuse, the employees fail to meet the said requirements. Authorities then decide on punitive measures such as meting out corporal punishment or menial labour as in the classroom situation. In other working situations, the employers adopt strategies like "no work no pay", forfeiture of some fringe benefits, etc. In cases of recalcitrant abuse of intoxicating drinks and drugs, authorities are forced to take drastic steps like suspension from school or work for a short period or dismissal.



From the discussions above it is clear that money has a detrimental effect on human behaviour. Man turns into a beast because of his excessive love for money. Human life is no longer valued. Brotherly love becomes a thing of the past.

#### 4.2 Juvenile Delinquency in Modern Societies

The theme of juvenile delinquency in modern societies is another social problem that is equally burdensome and is also closely related to the theme that money is the source of evil. Juvenile delinquency was all the time a major attribute of urban township life. The development of self-governing and independent national states has led towards the development of civilised societies which prefer to live in townships where the rate of crime is high among youths because there is much idling during leisure time at their disposal. Today juvenile delinquency manifests itself in various forms such as drug and alcohol abuse, premature and/or pre-marital sexual relations and pregnancies, gambling, murder and robbery, truancy, rape, etc.

Now follows a detailed exposition on how Lentsoane develops the theme of juvenile delinquency in modern societies with special reference to its various forms in the above-mentioned paragraph:

The modern youth is susceptible to all forms of malpractices such as pot and dagga smoking. Lentsoane captures this practice in the second stanza of "*Lebake*" (Dagga). He says:

*Ke tupu! tupu! meši maswiswaneng*  
*Dinkuteleng moo go khukhunwago.*  
*Wena sekhukhuni o tla bonwa ke sebatladi,*  
*Wa bololwa ke monkgo go nkg,*  
*Monkgo sebitša motho a le kgole. (1971:33)*

It is puff! puff! smokes in darkness  
In corners where they move surreptitiously.  
You croucher will be seen by the watcher,  
You will be revealed by the aroma that smells,  
The bad smell that is hated by people  
The smell that beckons at a distance.

In this stanza one gains the impression that although the youth is aware of the wrong he does in smoking dagga, he cannot refrain. He is addicted. These secret activities of the modern youth are captured in the first two lines of the excerpt. Smoking takes place in the night in secluded corners (dinkuteleng). The poet warns them that even if they think they are safe in these corners, they will be discovered one day because the sage says: "*Sekhukhuni se bonwa ke sebatladi*" (The croucher is seen by the watcher). Moreover, the pungent smell of dagga cannot be covered. It will betray the culprits. Apart from running the risk of arrest, youths harm their health because dagga has illusive, hallucinogenic and sleepy effects on the abusers. Lentsoane reveals this in the 4th stanza of "*Lebake*" (Dagga) when he states:

*Ba hlahlatha le naga bana ba batho,*

*Ba ebaeba ba šešerekane dihlogo,*

*Ba ralala ba ratharatha ba nnoši,*

*Ba ipotšiša ba iphetola,*

*Ba šupašupa lefeela*

*Ba sega ntšhi ge e feta. (1971:33)*

They wander about the poor children,

They go hither and thither deliriously

They roam about talking to themselves,

They ask questions and answer themselves,

They are repeatedly pointing at nothing

They laugh at a fly passing by.

The harmful effects of dagga among its abusers are beautifully illustrated in the above quote. One can actually visualise the image of a drug addict. It is seen in their way of walking - "*ba hlahlatha*" (wandering about), in their mental state - "*ba šešerekane dihlogo*" (are delirious), in their way of talking - "*ba ratharatha ba nnoši*" (are talking to themselves), "*ba ipotšiša ba iphetola*" (are asking themselves and answering themselves), "*ba sega ntšhi ge e feta*" (are laughing at a fly passing by).

This is indeed an apt image of a drug addict. He cannot be accountable for his words and actions, neither can he have physical control of himself. The pity is that such misbehaviours are displayed by young people from whom much is still expected. This,

in my opinion, is the message Lentsoane is striving to drive home in this poem.

Abuse of intoxicating drinks is another form of juvenile delinquency. Lentsoane expresses his sentiment about youths who have become delinquents due to abuse of intoxicating drinks in the 3rd stanza of the poem "*Bafsa ba lehono*" (Youths of Today) thus:

*Le reng le ineeletše madila?*  
*Le thunthelang ka nkgong le lebotlelong?*  
*Ga go mošemane, ga go ngwanenyana,*  
*Ga go lesogana, ga go kgarebe,*  
*Koša go binwa e tee.*  
*Ke maodi a gogolwago ke noka' madila. (1971:34)*

Why have you given yourselves to liquor?  
Why do you swim in a big clay-pot and a bottle?  
There is no boy, there is no girl,  
There is no lad, there is no lass,  
All dance to the same tune.  
It is flotsam that is being carried away  
by the river of beer.

Abuse of alcoholic beverages is evident in the above stanza. Many people irrespective of age and sex differences resort to liquor abuse. Through the use of rhetorical questions

in lines 1 & 2 of the quote, the poet states his personal concern and worry about abuse of intoxicating drinks. In line 2 the poet employs the image of a marine animal, particularly fish, through the term "*thuntha*" (swim) from which "*thunthelang*" is derived, and of beer-containers "*ka nkgong le lebotlelong*" (in a clay-pot and a bottle) in an attempt to illustrate that abusers of intoxicating drinks feel like fish in the water when they drink or mix beer of African and Western cultures. People start abusing beer on the grounds of amusement as an escape from reality (the reality of personal or family problems), eventually their lives deteriorate. The poet illustrates this fact through the image of a river, i.e. "*noka' madila*" (the river of beer) in which abusers of beer are compared to "*magogodi*" (flotsam) in the last line of the stanza above. This image of flotsam explains that abusers of intoxicating drinks are no longer responsible for their destinies. They have no aim to achieve anything in life as they are desperados. Lentsoane exposes the detrimental effects of abusing intoxicating drinks on mankind, particularly youths, as a social problem in communities today.

Truancy is another form of juvenile delinquency. Youths of today resent attending school as a way of preparing themselves for future adult life. They drop out of school with intent to earn a living immediately, which Lentsoane exposes in lines 4-6 of the 4th stanza of the same poem thus:

*Ba hlohlonwa ke diatla,*  
*Ba phamola dikanapa tša bommisisi,*  
*Ba hula metse ya batho. (1971:35)*

They are itched by hands,  
They snatch bags of Missuses,  
They break into people's houses.

One gathers from the text that youths are thieves. Theft as a form of juvenile delinquency indicates that youths leave school unequipped with skills that are necessary for adult life. With the use of the idiom: "*Ba hlohlonwa ke diatla*" (They are itched by hands) in line 1 and the words: "*phamola*" (snatch) and "*hula*" (break into) in the extract above, the poet stresses that youths have become kleptomaniacs in their premature efforts to earn a livelihood. With such intentions one evidently becomes aware that youths of today are aimless hedonists because more often than not they steal for the pleasure of satisfying their drinking lust rather than for use in rainy days.

Juvenile delinquency may manifest itself in the form of murder. In the townships youths more often than not group themselves into gangs in order to perform evil deeds. They resort to robbery, murder, rape and other evil actions in order to eke a living. They execute their activities with extreme ruthlessness and callousness. They do not hesitate to take a man's life. The actions of such groups or gangsters are accurately recorded by Lentsoane in the 5th stanza of the same poem. He asserts:

*Dithipa di sega batho e sego dinama,*  
*Dilepe di phapha batho e sego dikgong.*  
*Dilo di fetogile. (1971:35)*

Knives cut people not meat,  
Axes chop people not wood,  
Things have changed.

The poetic effect of the lines above is brought about by the poet's use of the positive-negative structure of his sentences. Household instruments are no longer used for the purposes for which they were manufactured.

Aversion to religion, especially Christianity, that has formative influences on the moral character of youths is a form of juvenile delinquency. Youths prefer conforming to some under-world cults which are inclined towards juvenile delinquency in the form of cliques or gangs. Lentsoane observes in lines 3-4 of the 6th stanza of the same poem as follows:

*Ba ikgethetše tsela ya Lenaba,*  
*Ba utswitšwe dipelo ke kgoši ya leswiswi. (1971:35)*

They have chosen for themselves the way of the Devil,  
Their hearts are stolen by the king of darkness.

Here the poet uses a Biblical allusion to emphasise the evil perpetrated by the youth. Here "*Lenaba*" refers to the Devil who it is believed is the king of all evil human activities.



Gambling is a form of juvenile delinquency. For a youth to be integrated into a particular gang or clique, he must be able to gamble with cards, dice, etc. as a means of earning a living. Lentsoane expresses this view in lines 5 & 6 of the 10th stanza of "*Bafsa ba lehono*" (Youths of Today). He says:

*Di betša marapo a Sathane,*  
*Di itshenyetša bophelo. (1971:36)*

They throw down bones of Satan  
They spoil their life.

Since gambling is associated with dishonest ways of earning a livelihood, the poet refers to the dice as the bones of the devil. In other words nothing good can come out of such a game. Nonetheless, the youth enjoys money earned in this way.

Premature and premarital sexual relations and pregnancies are forms of juvenile delinquency. Youths indulge in these activities that disrupt their future lives. Their activities rush them into adult-life prematurely. Their failure to look after children forces them into the labour market unprepared for it. Their failure to meet the demands of work forces them into the streets where they perpetrate all forms of evil. Lentsoane expresses this viewpoint in lines 4-6 of the second stanza of "*Bafsa ba lehono*" (Youths of Today) thus:

*Ba tseba diphiri tša bophelo ka pela,*

*Ba metša ba se ba hlahuna,*

*Tša ba bipela. (1971:34)*

They know secrets of life early,

They swallow without chewing,

They become constipated.

The poet employs anti-climax in the idioms in lines 2 & 3 of the excerpt above. Through this figure of speech (anti-climax), the poet clearly illustrates that youths become totally frustrated by their hasty actions and the future usually becomes bleak to them.

Lentsoane concludes this theme of juvenile delinquency by warning youths against its evil consequences in the last stanza of "*Bafsa ba lehono*" (Youths of Today) as follows:

*Bafsa le re leša dihlong,*

*Le nyamiša batswadi.*

*Thakgang mesepele ya lena,*

*Ilang tše mpe,*

*Le tšhabane le tša leswiswi,*

*Gobane tša leswiswi di felela nyanyeng. (1971:36)*

Youths, we feel ashamed of you,

You disappoint your parents.

Improve your ways,

Refrain from evil,  
Avoid evil ways,  
Because evil ways leave you in the lurch.

With reference to all forms of juvenile delinquency we have cited in our discussion, one understands why the poet has sounded a word of admonition to youths in the quote above. Juvenile delinquency is a disgrace for parents and the community. Youths have to mend their evil ways otherwise they face a bleak future. Juvenile delinquency is, therefore, a menace to communities today. Youths and adults should join hands in combating all forms of juvenile delinquency for the sake of building a healthy nation.

#### **4.3 Abuse of Intoxicating Drinks**

Another social problem that is inextricably bound to juvenile delinquency is the theme that pertains to abuse of intoxicating drinks among youths and adults alike. Abuse of alcoholic beverages has become a topical issue for public concern today. The rate at which youths and adults of both sexes abuse intoxicating drinks is very alarming. An examination of this theme shows that Lentsoane is opposed to abuse of intoxicating drinks.

Lentsoane points out the purpose for which beer was originally brewed in an attempt to orientate novice or amateur drinkers. Many people have deviated from our traditional African and social drinking habits typical of the nobility and the king at the royal kraal to drunkenness which is some form of public indecency which the poet rejects in lines

4 & 5 of the verse "*Bjala*" (Beer) thus:

*Ke mogwera' maaparankwe le bakgomana,  
Mogwera' bonkadingala. (1988:10)*

It is the friend of tiger-wearers and nobility,  
The friend of traditional medicinemen.

Drinking in traditional life was a social entertainment. There were always beer-pots at the king's kraal. Visitors were always entertained by being offered some beer to drink. Perhaps that is the reason why Lentsoane refers to it as "a friend of the king and nobles". Every king in a traditional society had a personal medicineman who lived in his kraal. It is he who saw to it that the king's beer was not poisoned. Thus he also enjoyed the privilege of drinking with the king. The king, nobles and a medicineman would spend the whole day drinking the traditional beer while at the same time maintaining their dignity as prominent leaders of the community contrary to what everyone sees today. One cannot distinguish between leaders and their subjects with reference to their faulty drinking habits.

According to Lentsoane, the drinking habits of people today defeat the purpose for which beer is brewed. In an attempt to rectify this malady, the poet points out the purposes for which beer is brewed. In lines 6-9 of "*Bjala*" (Beer) he says:

*Wa ntlhoka mererong ke bohlola,*

*Ke go nyaka go rumula bagologolo,*  
*Ke go nyaka go befiša ditaba,*  
*Ke go nyaka go ikobela molato. (1988:10)*

It is unheard of to miss me at occasions,  
It will be a provocation of the ancestors,  
It will be an aggravation of matters,  
It will be an incrimination of oneself.

One deduces from the above extract that intoxicating drinks have an indispensable purpose to serve. They are meant for entertainment at all special functions such as wedding ceremonies, a ceremony for congratulating and welcoming fresh initiates from the circumcision school, graduation parties, propitiational ceremonies, etc. Without beer, occasions like these will definitely bore attendants. Through the repetition of the phrase: "*Ke go nyaka go ...* " (It will be ...) in the initial stages of lines 2-4 of the quote, the poet stresses that the inavailability of beer at special occasions is an intentional offence against mankind and gods. Such a deviation in our traditional African life would precipitate a fine that would have to be settled by the head of the family with a goat or sheep.

Another important purpose for which beer is brewed is to inform the royal house about a specific occasion that a particular family holds. A pot of beer called "*sebege*" in accompaniment of a piece of meat from a slaughtered beast called "*lehlakore*" is sent to the royal kraal as a token of loyalty to the authority of the king. Failure to comply with the specified procedure or custom was punishable with the head of a beast at the royal

court in the past. One could, therefore, ascribe the abundance of food and beer in the royal house, as it used to be, to this purpose. All the subjects of the king are duty-bound to serve him in all respects and at all times.

Among reasons that force one to abuse intoxicating drinks, there are these categories: personal, family, social and political pressures. These cause frustration in the individual who resorts to abuse of intoxicating drinks as a means of amusement through which one temporarily escapes from reality - one leads an utopian life. While the poet is fully aware that many people abuse intoxicating drinks at occasions for which it is brewed, he points out the socialising effects thereof in lines 1 & 2 of the second stanza of "*Galase ya Bjala*" (Liquor-tumbler) thus:

*Bodutu ga ke bo tsebe,  
Le ge go fetola nka se fetole.* (1988:13)

Solitude I never feel,  
Though to answer I may not answer.

One infers from the extract above that the poet employs personification through a liquor-tumbler that symbolises a social drinker. Many social drinkers believe that liquor is enjoyable when one drinks among others. It is from such an association or company that one is kept informed about local and world tidings. In the excerpt above, Lentsoane proves that if one avoids abuse of intoxicating drinks, one sets a good example of a social drinker.

There are many disadvantages of abusing intoxicating drinks. These become evident in the evil consequences of abusing alcoholic beverages which the poet cites in some of his poems.

Lentsoane exposes some evil consequences on the theme that concerns abuse of intoxicating drinks which some abusers experience on Mondays. Some workers usually arrive late or absent themselves from duty. The poet supports this statement in lines 3-6 of the first stanza of the poem "*Mošupologo*" (Monday) where he says:

*Bašoming ke mathata,  
Go tsoga ke go kgokgona,  
Go sepela ke go kgosoka,  
Ba tšwafa le sa ntšha nko. (1971:10)*

To workers it is a problem,  
Waking up is hard,  
Walking is a mere wobble,  
They are listless even at sunrise.

The adverse effect of intoxicating drinks on their abusers is evident in the stanza above. Through his choice of words such as "*kgokgona*" (moan), "*kgosoka*" (wobble) and "*tšwafa*" (listless), the poet amplifies the idea that workers feel dizzy as a result of hang-over which provides ample proof of their late-arrival on or absence from duty. Such loafers ultimately become sacked from work and turn into hobos.



Many abusers of intoxicating drinks usually die or become injured as a result of fights, falling, car accidents, etc. The poet substantiates this point of view in lines 11-13 of the first stanza of "*Mošupologo*" (Monday) when he states:

*Bangwe mahlo a rurugile*  
*Bangwe maoto a robegile,*  
*Bangwe matsogo a thinyegile. (1971:10)*

Some have swollen eyes,  
Some have broken legs,  
Some have sprained arms.

Abusers of intoxicating drinks usually exhaust their money by buying too much beer not only for their own consumption but also for the satisfaction of others. The poet expresses this view in lines 1-5 of the second stanza of "*Mošupologo*" (Monday) when he says:

*Tšhelete e ile,*  
*Dipotla ga di na selo,*  
*Dihlogo di a duma,*  
*Mala a a rora,*  
*A nyaka diyamaleng. (1971:10)*

Money is gone,  
Pockets are empty,  
Heads are aching,  
Intestines are rumbling,  
They need food.

We gather from the quote that abusers of intoxicating drinks usually spend their money lavishly, that is why they are ever broke. Very often one does come across abusers of intoxicating drinks who borrow money for commuting and food because of frustration. Borrowing becomes a habit because abusers of intoxicating drinks tend to borrow even clothes and other necessities of life until they fail to refund or compensate those who offered help, thus they create animosity for themselves. The poet also exposes another evil in an attempt to elucidate the theme on the abuse of intoxicating drinks as a social problem today.

Inasmuch as clashes occur between employers and employees on the grounds of drinking too much beer, so they do occur between teachers and pupils. The poet proves this opinion valid in lines 6-8 of the last stanza of "*Mošupologo*" (Monday) thus:

*Dikolong le hlabile ka kgaruru,  
Ke bothata gar'a morutiši le morutwana,  
Morutiši o nyaka tša mmušo wa gagwe. (1971:10)*

At schools it has risen with conflict,  
There is conflict between a teacher and a pupil,  
The teacher demands his work.

Many inconsiderate parents or guardians who are over-protective to their children or wards become angry with persuasive teachers who usually follow up sluggish pupils for gross negligence of their duties until they drop out of school because of poor parental discipline. Lentsoane's experience as a teacher has taught him that teachers are very often justified to demand work from pupils as he states in the last line of the extract above. He, therefore, advises parents to look into reasons for such clashes between teachers and pupils upon which they (parents) conclude that teachers hate their children. This proves why there is a lot of freedom of movement among pupils from schools in close proximity to their homes in preference to those that are remote. The progress of such pupils, particularly girls, becomes retarded and they fail repeatedly or drop out of such schools permanently because of teenage pregnancies, flirting, abduction by some unknown men, etc. The poet clearly illustrates that abuse of intoxicating drinks is a social problem.

Abuse of intoxicating drinks leads to addiction to alcohol. This is reflected in lines 88-91 of the poem "*Nthubu*" (Hollow). Lentsoane says:

*O kae wa gago mogwera?*

*A kae a gago mafotwana?*

*Di kae tša gago dithoto?*

*Se kae sa gago sehlagā? (1988:18)*

Where is your friend?

Where are your nestlings?

Where are your properties?

Where is your nest?

It is evident from the excerpt that abuse of intoxicating drinks leads to total deprivation. The poet stresses this state of deprivation on the part of the abuser of alcoholic drinks through the repetition of the interrogative word "*kae?*" (where?) in all rhetorical questions in lines 1-4. He reinforces the same opinion by explicitly reiterating that abuse of alcoholic beverages deprives one of all material benefits as he shows in these words: "*mogwera*" (friend), "*mafotwana*" (nestlings which symbolises children), "*dithoto*" (properties) and "*sehlaga*" (nest which symbolises a home) inasmuch as it has adverse effects on one's health. Wealth and health are, therefore, two main things that abusers of intoxicating drinks deprive themselves of.

Addiction to intoxicating drinks is not only a drawback to the abuser but to the entire society as Lentsoane illustrates with the character of Leseilane - nicknamed Nthubu (Hollow), which is a derogatory name symbolising an alcoholic teacher who has many university degrees, who also finds it very difficult to teach pupils because his health has deteriorated. His image and that of people of his calibre is tarnished whereas teachers should be of good example and worth emulating in every community. Eventually an alcoholic addict has to undergo rehabilitation which usually costs the state large amounts

of money and time.

Abuse of intoxicating drinks is indeed a social problem in communities today. The evil consequences of abusing alcoholic beverages among youths and adults should serve as a good lesson to our children as shown with Nthubu in both paragraphs. Such evils prove why churches and other social institutions, including the state in particular, are totally opposed to abuse of intoxicating drinks. Lentsoane expresses public opinion in his wish that all drinkers should emulate the drinking habits of African aristocrats if they don't prefer teetotalism.

An investigation on the purpose for which intoxicating drinks are brewed and disadvantages on the abuse thereof have prompted Lentsoane to give a warning to all people. He advises buyers of intoxicating drinks, particularly youths and women in lines 1 & 2 of the first stanza of the poem "*Galase ya Bjala*" (Liquor-tumbler) which reads:

*Wena o ntshwereco ntlheke*

*Gobane matsogo ke swerwe ke a mehutahuta. (1988:13)*

You who hold me, do it tenderly

Because I have been handled by various hands.

The fact that abusers of intoxicating drinks like any human being deserve tender care is apparent in the symbolism of a liquor-tumbler that the poet employs in the quote. Being fully aware of the risks to which abusers of intoxicating drinks are exposed in shebeens,

bar-lounges, streets, etc. he appeals to everyone to treat drunkards with meticulous care even in cases where they assume the offensive status in fights. Instead of being victors, abusers of alcoholic beverages do often become victims of their provocation. Furthermore, he warns everyone to drink beer with great care when he says:

*Ba tlile, ba ntlogetše,  
Le wena o tla ba etša,  
Ba ile, ba ntlogetše,  
Ba ile mo go sa bowego. (1988:13)*

They came, they left me,  
You will do as they did,  
They are gone, they left me,  
They have gone for good.

We gather from this stanza that beer has come to stay. One should, therefore, avoid over-drinking if one wishes to enjoy beer. Lentsoane successfully tackles the theme on abuse of intoxicating drinks as a social problem today.

#### 4.4 Child-Sex Abuse

Lentsoane has also drawn our attention to the theme of child-sex abuse as another social problem that haunts communities today. Children suffer abuse from adults who disrupt their (children's) future. Some people resort to child-abuse when they are either under

the influence of drugs and/or intoxicating drinks or merely out of lust. There are two common forms of child-abuse today, e.g. child-battering and child-sex abuse. We have culled sexual abuse of children for a detailed exposition because it is one of the worst evils pertaining to the child that society had ever experienced.

Sexual abuse of children is a contentious theme of the entire civilised world today. Parents, child-welfare organisations and State Departments of Justice join efforts in combatting child-sex abuse which is rife. Some psychologists, inter alia: Lloyd Vogelmann (attached to Wits University) and Roy Eskapa (attached to New York University) have already researched on child-sex abuse (paedophilia) and revealed that there are some minor societies of the world, e.g. The Chewa of Africa, The Lepcha of India and The Siwans of North America, etc. which still encourage and practice sexual intercourse between adults and children (the latter aged between 11 or 12 years) (Cosmopolitan 1989:112). The above-mentioned societies still indicate and attribute (although traditional to them) typical of the families of the Middle Ages today - the period during which society regarded and treated a child as a miniature adult and exposed it to sexual intercourse and manual labour as early as the age of seven years (Verster 1982:125-126).

Psychologists have also revealed that the theme of child-sex abuse is manifested in these forms: rape, incest, sodomy, etc. Very often perpetrators of child-sex abuse are not "dirty old men" but are lads and lasses under 35 years old, not strangers but close relatives of the victim, e.g. under 35 years old, not strangers but close relatives of the victim, e.g. parents, step-parents, siblings, etc., people of high socio-economic status, e.g. teachers, doctors, businessmen, etc. who are not insane, are of average intelligence and



are not sexually-frustrated, and homosexual and heterosexual paedophiles (Cosmopolitan 1989:112-113).

Lentsoane also addresses the theme of child-sex abuse in his poet "*Bogolo*" (Adulthood). He reprimands male adult sexual molesters of teenage girls in lines 1-3 of the first stanza when he states:

*O na le makatika moisa tena!*

*Na o na le mmitša?*

*O reng o ratwa ke digatlela?* (1981:20)

You are tricky, you guy!

Do you have a love potion?

Why are you loved by bambinos?

Sexual molesters of children use various tactics of attracting them. In the quote above, the poet states that he suspects one male adult sexual molester of using magical wands and other means of attraction in his (abuser's) dealings with teenagers. The poet reveals his suspicion of the use of mysterious tricks on the part of child-sex abusers. Rhetorical questions in lines 2 & 3 are intended to register dismay at and call to order child-sex molesters to stop applying some tactics (*makatika*) of attracting children, e.g. "*mmitša*" (love potion), bribery with money, some forms of amusement, etc. and then go for their equals instead of teenagers whom such sex-abusers merely exploit as they (children) are no match to their (abusers') lust. On the other hand, members of the community despise

sexual molesters of children. He is, therefore, addressed in derogatory terms such as "*moisa tena*" (you guy).

Society views a close association between adults and teenagers with serious suspicion today. In order to dispel any suspicion from such close association, the poet furnishes reasons that such companions usually advance in justifying their relationship in lines 4-7 of the first stanza of "*Bogolo*" (Adulthood) when he says:

*Bankga-matutu ba kwana le go ikgohla ka wena,*  
*Bangwe ba re o mogwera' bona,*  
*Bangwe ba re matsoku le hlapile gotee,*  
*Bangwe ba re madibeng le inotšwe gotee. (1981:21)*

Breast-milk-stinkers are fond of rubbing shoulders with you,  
Some claim that you are a friend of theirs,  
Some claim that you have been to circumcision school  
together,  
Some claim that you are of the same age.

From the extract above, we gather several claims of close association or relationship between teenagers and adult sex-molesters. In contrast to such claims, Lentsoane ridicules teenagers who are often seen in the company of adult sex-molesters through the irony in which he refers to them as "*bankga-matutu*" (breast-milk-stinkers, i.e. neonates) in line 1. Through such irony, the poet is intent on making sex-molesters aware of their

age and dignity in relation to the stage at which these teenagers are and both people be shy of their misdeeds. Among such allegations of justifying equality and close association between sex-molesters and teenagers that Lentsoane opposes, there are claims of friendship that is based on having attended school together or having been initiated during the same year and being of the same age. Adult sex-molesters never object to such claims in view of their benefit.

In most cases child-sex abusers avoid relations with their equals. Lentsoane expresses public opinion when he wonders why these child-sex abusers have their relationships estranged with all partners of their age in favour of teenagers for the satisfaction of their seemingly insatiable lust in these rhetorical questions in lines 1-6 of the second stanza of "*Bogolo*" (Adulthood):

*Bao ba lekanago nago bona ba a go hlala,*

*Ba itswalanya le bankga-mekgatho.*

*O na le eng ba go tšhabang?*

*O bopilwe ka letsopa lefe?*

*O reng o ratega?*

*O reng o sa ratege? (1981:20)*

Your equals desert you,

They make relationships with bambinos.

What is wrong with you, why do they desert you?

With what clay are you moulded?

Why are you loved?

Why are you not loved?

We deduce from the quote that the poet is sceptical about the sexual potency of one male adult sex-molester. His female equals desert him for no apparent reason in favour of teenage boys that the poet addresses derogatorily as "*bankga-mekgatho*" (bambinos). The behaviour of his female equals clearly illustrates he (the sex-molester) never satisfies their sexual desire. The same behaviour of these women is a major cause for concern on the part of the public to doubt his manhood, i.e. his male fabric which the poet questions through the use of the word "*letsopa*" (clay) in line 4 above, which term reveals that he is exceptional from other men. By employing the paradox in rhetorical questions in lines 3 & 4 of the quoted lines, the poet further emphasises his scepticism about love affairs, particularly sexual relations, between adult sex-molesters and teenagers. He states in this paradox that there is no mutual love in such relationships but sexual exploitation. As the public is disgusted at such sexual escapades, Lentsoane calls sex-abusers to order through the apostrophe in the last line of the last stanza of "*Bogolo*" (Adulthood) which reads:

*Bogolo, gola.* (1981:21)

Maturity, mature.

While Lentsoane reprimands adult child-sex abusers on one hand, he is alarmed at teenage girls who usually blow their trumpets in appreciation of such sexual relationships with male adults from whom they (teenage girls) benefit money, clothes, visits to holiday

resorts, enjoy their company as party-girls, enjoy rides in luxury cars, etc. on the other. He warns teenagers to keep their sexual relationships a secret in lines 1-5 of the verse "*Kgotla o mone*" (Dip and Taste) - the title which symbolises honey when he states:

*Kgotla o mone,*  
*O kgotle o monela thoko*  
*Gobane kgotlaomone ye*  
*Ke kgotlaomone ya bogolo,*  
*Ke kgotlaomone ya ba bagolo. (1988:28)*

Dip and taste,  
You must dip and taste secretly  
Because this dip-and-taste  
It is a dip-and-taste of maturity,  
It is a dip-and-taste of mature ones.

In the lines above, the poet plays with the repetition of the word "*kgotlaomone*" (dip-and-taste), and "*bogolo*" (maturity) and "*ba bagolo*" (mature ones). The purpose of this play on words is to emphasise that all youths should actually reserve love-making for adults otherwise they (youths) tread on dangerous grounds and are not accountable and responsible for its consequences such as illegitimate children and their care, contracting venereal diseases that are likely to make them sexually impotent at an early stage, their educational and career opportunities become disrupted or permanently shattered, losing chances of marriage, etc. These are some of the evil consequences on the theme of

child-sex abuse as a social problem.

Lentsoane purposely distracts the attention of teenagers from indulgence in love-making which abounds with undesirable consequences. It is a wish of the public that teenagers pay special attention to some kind of rewarding "*kgotlaomone*" (dip-and-taste) for which authors like himself (Lentsoane), O.K. Matsepe, etc. advocate. These are a few concise but all-embracing advantages of such "*kgotlaomone*" (dip-and-taste) which symbolises education (book-learning) that Lentsoane points out: It sharpens the intellect, it nourishes the physical body, it is future-oriented, etc. (1988:28).

Lentsoane concludes by summarising the advantages of education in the last two lines of the verse "*Kgotla o mone*" (Dip and taste) thus:

*E babalele e tla go babalela,  
E tla go fa lesedi.* (1988:28)

Take care of it, it will care for you,  
It will provide you with light.

We gather from these lines that perseverance is the mother of success. Through the horizontal repetition of the verbal root: "*-babalel-*" (care) in line 1, the poet creates ambiguity with which he stresses that a learned person usually reaps the fruits of his labour. With the use of the image "*lesedi*" (light) in line 2, the poet implies that education is a guide. Once one is learned, one becomes optimistic about one's future.



One is, therefore, prepared to explore the feared and unknown world that one can transform into a safe haven for mankind. Of all the steps that youths can adopt to protect themselves against sexual abuse, education is the best according to Lentsoane.

#### 4.5 **Résumé**

Through the exposition of themes on social problems that we have examined so far, one realises that African Socialism that was practised during the Pre-colonial era in Africa is better than capitalism typical of Western Civilisation. Capitalism has its merits and demerits to mankind. Lentsoane has concentrated on its demerits in the form of the social injustices of his time in his poetry. Today the state authorities are busy with social and political reforms that we hope will address all the social problems that are consequences of the laws of the Old Order that are repealed or are still to be attended to.

The value of money in the civilised world of today as compared to that of cattle in the traditional African context cannot be over-emphasised. It is upon this reason that Lentsoane reveals that every able-bodied person tries by hook or crook to get money. The poet, therefore, calls for the stamping out of the crooked ways, e.g. robbery, burglary, theft, murder, etc. through which some people strive to earn a livelihood.

The high frequency of delinquency in all its forms becomes an acceptable and normal way of life to all youths today. In reality, delinquency is a distorted philosophy of life of what socially-acceptable norms, values and standards of life are. Youths of today are exposed to many harms in the streets during their leisure time. Communities should



provide youths with many and diversified recreational facilities that will entirely absorb their interest during leisure time, should invite professionals in various vocational fields to guide youths and conduct educational seminars on existing and new social problems that are likely to frustrate their future goals. The future of every community lies in the hands of its youths whose future aims and expectations should be well-gearred.

In an attempt to combat any form of human abuse, particularly child-sex abuse, the human society should ensure that, apart from the laws of the state and the role of state agencies that may have shortcomings in defending people against abuse, there should be parental organisations, SOS clinics and rehabilitation centres through which the victims who are already emotionally and psychologically disturbed due to some social indignations and injustices can be re-integrated into the communities as responsible members or citizens and, further, ensure that culprits are brought to book.

As a social poet, Lentsoane advocates an end to social corruption and chaos. According to him, the human society is naturally orderly. This orderliness has been disturbed by man's greed which is a major cause of inequalities, particularly the unequal distribution of wealth among people. The majority of the people in every country are poor workers who engage in collective bargaining with the employers through trade unions. These trade unions together with the government strive for better working conditions, better salaries and other fringe benefits. A move towards the betterment of living conditions for the majority of people will obviously minimise social evils.

## CHAPTER V

### THEMES ON PROTEST

#### 5.0 Introduction

The development of industries has brought about many advantages and disadvantages to people all over the world. For purposes of this chapter, we will have to pin-point some disadvantages of industrialisation such as urbanisation of Africans, migratory labour, overcrowding in towns and townships, squatting, raiding of houses by police, forced removals, unemployment, starvation, mischief, etc. In the light of the facts that are mentioned above, it becomes imperative for the state to control the influx of people from rural to urban areas. Problems arise when such influx control legislations are discriminatory and often meet with resistance from the under-privileged section of the population.

The state has to plan and re-plan in order to satisfy the requirements of its dynamic population. In such a case many people may face inconveniences such as forced removals, living in shanties, settlement far from towns and cities that provide employment, people have to commute long distances at high fares, staying away from home for long periods, etc. The inconveniences that relate to re-planning will not just be welcomed. Conflicts often rise between the state and the people who are affected, particularly Africans.

Discrimination of man by man on the basis of race, colour, creed, sex, socio-economic status, etc. is indecent, unholy and unacceptable. Discriminatory laws in every state are intended to protect the interests of the privileged group at the expense of the under-privileged. So long as the state practices discrimination in whatever form, there will always be conflict among its citizens because the under-privileged people demand equality with their counterparts.

Man protests against all forms of injustice in many ways such as rebellion, peaceful protest marches, verbal protest, etc. God does not discriminate against any individual or group. If man can eradicate all forms of injustice, the world will experience peace and stability.

In this chapter, we will concentrate on the discussion of the following protest themes: Influx control and its consequences, Removals and their consequences and Equality of people before God. The first two protest themes were problems at the time Lentsoane recorded them. State authorities have already repealed some of the discriminatory laws in an attempt to ease the tension from the side of Africans.

### **5.1 Influx Control and its Consequences**

One of the protest themes is influx control and its resultant inconveniences. Towns and cities offer labour opportunities. People of all races migrate from old or stagnant to mushrooming and progressive towns and cities or from rural to urban areas in search of green pastures.

Consequently towns and cities face the inflow of people to such an extent that accommodation becomes insufficient. In its effort to avoid overcrowding and squatting in towns and cities and their outskirts, the state adopts influx control measures that restrict the freedom of movement of people, particularly Africans. Africans could not move from one place to another or be seen passing in towns by night unless they had special permits. Neither could they sleep in towns and their environs unless they carried such documentary proofs on their person as permits. Failure to carry such proof would lead one to prosecution. People usually view any control measure as a veiled form of discrimination against them, especially in the government where they are not altogether represented in its legislative and executive bodies.

In lines 1-5 of the verse "*Mophamola-dikanapa*" (Bag-snatcher), Lentsoane cites a very good example of a person (an African) whom influx control legislation hits hard as follows:

*Ke ipegile motse-mogolo,  
Motse wa mabaibai,  
Ka re ke moeng nkamogeleng.  
Le šišintše hlogo tša phatla tša mašošo,  
La re Matome ikgate mohlala. (1975:32)*

I reported myself to the big city,  
A city of splendour,  
I said I am a visitor, welcome me.

You shook heads with wrinkled faces,  
And said, Matome, retrace your spoor.

In lines 1 & 3 of the extract above, the poet clearly illustrates that Matome is a novice job-seeker whom the splendid cities attracted. Nonetheless, he is unaccustomed to inhumane ways and means of living that embarrass him in towns and cities that are typical of Western Civilisation while he is representative of traditional African lifestyle. According to our African tradition, in every village a stranger is welcomed at the headman's or chief's kraal where he might be provided with food, drinks and even sleeping accommodation free of charge. On the contrary Matome is embarrassed and shocked by the inhospitality of state authorities towards him. With the irony in "*Le šišintše hlogo tša phatla tša mašošo*" (You shook heads with wrinkled faces) in line 4 and the idiom "*...ikgate mohlala*" (... retrace your spoor) in line 5 of the same excerpt, the poet places the state authorities in clear perspective. Their anger against Africans is vented on Matome through their indifferent welcome. Subsequently some timorous job-seekers would have evidently returned home (i.e. to rural areas) while disheartened ones do stay in urban areas regardless of such disapproval.

Influx control measures are applied in towns or cities and townships. Police raid houses by night in search of squatters who should face prosecution. In lines 1-4 of the first stanza of "*Apara re sepele*" (Dress and let us go), Lentsoane shows how squatters protest vehemently against the callous attitude of the police. He states:

*Hlong ke yeo boradikoporo ba e hlokago.*

*Maikutlo ke ao ba a hlokago.*

*Ba sa tlile gape go tlo ntlhogohla,*

*Go tlo nteka maatla. (1975:57)*

Shame is what helmet-wearers do lack,

Feelings are what they do lack.

They have still come back to provoke me,

To size me up.

In the above quote, the wrath and ruthlessness of police who execute their duties in line with influx control measures are evident. The use of the ironic term "*boradikoporo*" (helmet-wearers) denotes African police who put on brimmed helmets. Town councils (i.e. White authorities) employed such African police to arrest the so-called African squatters. In their enforcement of influx control measures, police carried out the orders of their White masters with honesty and loyalty as the poet has stated emphatically through the end-rhyme scheme in lines 1 & 2 of the said extract. One deduces from it that police are very good at following up a particular squatter until he disappears from their area of jurisdiction.

The poet successfully exposes the crucial effects of the red-tape that state authorities applied against Africans in towns and/or cities and on the outskirts as a result of influx control measures.



Lentsoane points out the other consequences of the protest theme of influx control legislations in his poetry as follows:

Squatters do not enjoy their sleep after a day's hardwork or a tedious search for work because of influx control measures. They fear arrest which ends up with fines or imprisonment or deportation to homelands or rural areas. Lentsoane substantiates this point in lines 5-8 of the first stanza of "*Apara re sepele*" (Dress and let us go) when he says:

*Tlhompho le e beile kae?*

*Le ntsošetša eng?*

*Le a bona ke sa itsheba le badimo,*

*Ke sa kgomaganya di kgaoga. (1975:57)*

Where is your respect?

Why do you awaken me?

You see I am still whispering to the gods,

I am still mending while they crumble.

The poet echoes the agony of the squatters in the above excerpt. It is human to respect one who is asleep. In lines 1 & 2 of the quote, the poet employs rhetorical questions to illustrate that squatters usually protest loudly to deaf (African) police who disturb them (squatters) repeatedly while they (squatters) still communicate with their ancestors who gear their future plans. Africans believe that God controls their destinies through



"*badimo*" (gods) as mediators who visit them at night during their sound sleep in a peaceful atmosphere typical of rural areas unlike that in towns and cities which militates against such spiritual visits which usually bring one good omen. In cities and townships where Africans are not at ease, they usually have nightmares during their sleep at night. Other evil consequences of the protest theme of influx control legislation emerge when White authorities apply red-tape. Squatters suffer many indignities such as being sent up and down for nothing, being shouted at for failure to produce the prescribed documents, catching cold as they are forced out of houses or escape into the neighbouring open veld for hiding during the early hours of the morning while it is ice-cold in winter or are exposed to some poisonous insects and reptiles out in the bush in summer and other injuries they sustain by falling when they try to escape for hiding or while hooligans and police beat them up. Lentsoane highlights such sufferings among squatters in lines 1-4 of the second stanza of "*Apara re sepele*" (Dress and let us go) when he asserts:

*Ke tlopatlopišwa bokaphoofolo,*

*Ke tsena mo ke etšwa,*

*Molato ga o tšwe ka kgoro.*

*Tša mmušo wa gago o di nyakile wa di hloka. (1975:57)*

I am tossed hither and thither like an animal,

I enter here and exit,

The problem is not resolved.

You demanded those of your government to no avail.

The fact that state authorities apply red-tape against job-seekers is evident in the above extract. The simile in line 1 and the play on words in "*etšwa*" (exit) and "*ga o tšwe*" (not resolved) are expressions that the poet employs to illustrate clearly that the squatters are weary of red-tape that state authorities apply against them. These state authorities lack the decency of treating Africans as fellow human-beings. They torture Africans relentlessly.

The worst form of red-tape as an evil consequence of the protest theme of influx control legislation becomes evident to job-seekers. They become sick and tired of going to labour bureau offices repeatedly but fail to register for employment or fail to obtain a permit as a resident of a particular town and also of standing in long queues without the satisfaction of their requirements. Lentsoane supports this point in the second stanza of "*Boa gape bosasa*" (Come Back Tomorrow) when he states:

*Tshepho e ile gobane maabane ke hlwele mo,  
Pampiri tša lena di a tshotshoma,  
Ke lapile go di lapa,  
Bjale le sa ntlaišetša eng?  
Maabane le ile ke ile bosasa,  
Lehono ke bosasa gomme le sa re bosasa. (1975:61)*

Hope is lost because yesterday I spent the day here  
Your documents are greasy,  
I am tired of mending them,

Now, for what are you still persecuting me?  
Yesterday you said I should come tomorrow,  
Today is tomorrow but you are still saying tomorrow.

We gather from the lines above that African job-seekers are bound to despair as a result of the red-tape that state authorities apply against them. In line 4 the poet uses a rhetorical question in an attempt to create an image of a job-seeker who is depressed by red-tape. He is desperate about state authorities who are reluctant to meet his demands on dubious grounds that such demands do not satisfy their stipulations. The poet also employs a play on words through the repetition of the term "*bosasa*" (tomorrow) with which he has brought about external rhyme at the end of lines 5 & 6, and horizontal rhyme in line 6. The use of this repetition in the form of the rhyme scheme emphasises that red-tape is applied indefinitely until the job-seeker gives up his hopes. Once one is in despair, one becomes frustrated and the future seems bleak. State authorities, aware of the frustration of Africans who go astray as a result of the implementation of influx control legislations, bring them to book. Influx control measures that state authorities applied against Africans prove undoubtedly that Africans were not afforded the treatment and opportunities they deserved in towns and townships.

Lack of employment is a consequence of the theme of influx control legislations that force people to seek alternative means of earning a living while they have their subsequent detrimental effects on mankind. Joblessness is a major cause of poverty everywhere. Poverty becomes evidently rife in townships as Lentsoane mentions in the second stanza of "*Dithobolong*" (At Dumping Grounds) when he says:

*A ulaula gohle mantho,*  
*A topa se a lahla,*  
*A dupadupa ditshitswana,*  
*A dupa merogo le dienywa,*  
*A latswa se, a latswa sela.*  
*Ba tloga ba rwele batho ba batho,*  
*Ba tšhitšhidišwa ke mankgeretla,*  
*Ba robja ke maganogano,*  
*Difahlego di phuthollogile. (1981:44)*

They gather everywhere people,  
They pick up this and throw away,  
They sniff repeatedly at little tins,  
They sniff repeatedly at vegetables and fruits,  
They taste this, they taste that.  
They go away having carried people of people,  
Drudging under tatters,  
Heavily laden with foods returned from mouth,  
Faces being radiant.

Destitute people, particularly those who reside in townships, desperately dig up basic necessities for life from dumping grounds as is evident in the quote. The words "*ulaula*" (gather everywhere), "*topa*" (pick up), the repetition of "*dupadupa*" (sniff repeatedly) and "*latswa*" (taste) reveal that some Africans are destitute. They try to keep the fire burning

in their homes by procuring edible stuff from the dumping grounds through all their sense-perception. So long as they are unemployed, poor people live in deprivation. Some obtain essentials for a living from dumping-grounds after their self-sufficient neighbours have got rid of them. Left-overs of edibles are suggested in these terms: "*ditshitswana*" (little tins - that denote tinned food), "*merogo le dienywa*" (vegetables and fruit) and "*maganogano*" (foods returned from mouth) while attire is suggested in "*mankgeretla*" (tatters). In the last line the poet reveals that these disadvantaged Africans, with whom he sympathizes, rejoice in making ends meet through such lowly and humble means. In this way these Africans are to survive the painful pangs of hunger and weather extremities in abject poverty day in and day out. The obvious detrimental effects of food and attire that are procured in this manner are manifold as Lentsoane points out in lines 1-3 of the third stanza of the same poem.

*Ke bagwera ba dithobolo,*  
*Ke bagwera ba malwetsi,*  
*Ke bagwera ba mathata. (1981:44)*

They are friends of dumping-grounds,  
They are friends of diseases,  
They are friends of problems.

It is evident from the quote that Africans who gather food and other necessities of life from dumping-grounds are exposed to some risks. Through initial repetition of the phrase: "*Ke bagwera ba ...*" (They are friends of ...) in all the lines above, the poet

emphatically illustrates that Africans who live in townships are exposed to a myriad of sufferings such as lowering their human dignity, feeling of self-rejection and risks on their health because of the adverse consequences of influx control measures.

To some people, life in townships leaves much to be desired. State authorities sometimes reap what they sowed through influx control measures which contribute to the dissatisfactory standards of living among some Africans who exploit their loop-holes. Being subjected to pressures of life in townships, only the fittest African residents survive. Lentsoane shows that some residents of townships adopt crooked means of earning a livelihood - hence he calls townships "*Metsedillo*" (Towns-of-Grief) in the last stanza of the same poem thus:

*Ke metsedillo,  
Metse ya mabaibai,  
Moo bangwe ba phelago bošego fela.  
Go bapatšwa tšohle  
Ka ntle le lerato le lethabo,  
Ka ntle le khutšo le kwelobohloko.  
Ke metsedillo. (1981:52)*

They are towns-of-grief,  
Towns of splendour,  
Where some live by night only.  
Everything is sold



Except love and joy,  
Except peace and sympathy.  
They are towns-of-grief.

Residents of townships are not at ease with several things as a distant observer may presume they are as we gather from the excerpt. Residents of townships are faced with many grievances. The contrast that the poet has employed in lines 1 & 2 reveals that distance lends enchantment to the eye. Townships are very attractive at a remote distance but once one lives in them, one gains a true picture. To many residents, townships are fraught with grievances as the poet asserts in the refrain "*Ke metsedillo*" (They are towns-of-grief) in the first and last lines. The poet, further, explains that some African residents of townships, regardless of their grievances, do strive to engage themselves in illicit sales of goods such as dagga and other drugs, smuggling minerals and dangerous weapons, etc. In this way, Africans advertently defy the laws and exploit their loop-holes with an intent to earn a livelihood. After gains of such stolen goods, they never pay sales and income taxes and the state suffers great financial losses.

The consequences of influx control measures were to a great extent evil to both the state and its people. The state applied influx control legislation to the disadvantage of many Africans. Some disheartened Africans who survived in townships eked a livelihood through foul means. Subsequently the state is faced with a lot of criminals who must be prosecuted. Thus, arose the need for the repeal of influx control legislations.



## 5.2 Removals and their Consequences

Another protest theme concerns forced removals of people from one place to another and their subsequent inconveniences. Lentsoane observes the sufferings or the lot of Africans as a result of forced removals and records their feelings in his poetic material. For example, he echoes a feeling of being weary of forced removals through one person who is affected in lines 1-4 of his poem "*Phušulang*" (Demolish) when he says:

*Phušulang le fihle ka tlhokatekanyo,  
Phušulang, phušulang.  
Go tlopatlopa re tlopatlopile,  
Ga re tsebe gore re ile go feletša kae. (1988:37)*

Demolish down to no measurement,  
Demolish, demolish.  
We have been tossed hither and thither repeatedly.  
We don't know where we are going to end up.

The poet addresses the state on one hand and reveals the feelings of Blacks on the other in this excerpt. In lines 1 & 2 he reveals the arrogance of the state that it should be complacent with its forced removals. The state usually sends out instructions to residents to trek. If there is resistance on the part of residents, it sends bulldozers accompanied by armed police and soldiers to effect removals. Through the repetition of the word: "*phušulang*" (demolish) which suggests trekking in its context, the poet expresses feelings

of anger and despair among disillusioned Blacks who are affected by forced removals as the state re-plans. In the phrase "*Go tlopatlopa re tlopatlopile*" (We have been tossed hither and thither), the poet shows that Blacks have had enough with removals. Nonetheless, such was the case with the development of independent national and self-governing states when Africans suffered indignities of forced removals from the so-called "*nageng-tšhweu*" (white-spot) to the so-called "*nageng-ntsho*" (black-spot), i.e. a piece of land that is allocated for Blacks as their homeland. In the poem from which the quotations come, Lentsoane exposes some evil consequences of forced removals such as these:

Removals force the so-called squatters to leave their fore-fathers behind. In this way, tombs of the ancestors of removed people disappear and the people lose contact with their gods whom they have to propitiate during occasions of thanksgiving or difficult times.

Removals cause children of the community to lose their roots. The sense of origin and belonging in the young generations becomes adversely affected. These young generations will form a nation that will never be proud of its national songs and dances, national praise-poetry, national anthem, etc. In short, such generations lack national identity and patriotism.

Repeated removals are a major cause of devaluation of property which becomes damaged in transit. One loses interest in one's property like furniture which becomes scratched, broken, etc. as the poet elucidates in lines 49-51 of the verse "*Phušulang*" (Demolish)

thus:

*Dithoto ga di sa na bobono,*

*Dithoto tšela ga e sa le dithoto,*

*Dithoto tšela ke thoto tša tsela. (1988:38)*

Goods are no longer attractive,

Those goods are no longer worthy goods,

Those goods are ever on the way.

The depreciation of "*dithoto*" (property) in transit is evident from the lines above. People who were forced to trek have a strong reason to lose interest in their damaged goods in which they have invested their vast sums of money. The state that forced these people to trek does not even come in to compensate them for their loss.

A direct financial loss is incurred in many ways during forced removals. For instance, when people settle somewhere, they erect their own houses. It is a fact and common practice that whenever the state removes people from one place to another, there should be financial compensation for the expenses that may be incurred. It happens very often during forced removals that people are misconstrued to resist directives from the state. While people hopefully wait for financial compensation on their buildings, the state sends out troops of soldiers and police to drive them away while they forfeit such compensation. The state employs such tactics with an intent to perpetrate its oppressive laws. Lentsoane yearns for such financial compensation in lines 52-55 of the poem "*Phušulang*" (Demolish)

when he says:

*Phušulang le re llišeng,  
Pele re yago re bone tsela  
Pele re yago re kgone go hloma mešašana,  
Re kgone go swana le batho. (1988:38)*

Demolish and compensate us,  
Ahead we are going let us see the way  
Ahead we are going let us be able to erect shacks,  
So that we may look like other people.

The benefits of financial compensation on the demolished houses of the people who are forced to trek are evident in the quote above. In lines 2 & 3 the poet emphasises such advantages of financial compensation on the buildings of the people who have to trek such as the means of transport and erection of decent accommodation wherever they may settle. The state should, therefore, carry the burden of its poor planning system which sometimes results in continued removals of some communities.

Removals affect man and beast. These are usually at a disadvantage. The poet raises this point in lines 76 & 77 of "*Phušulang*" (Demolish) thus:

*Go lla motho,  
Go lla phoofolo. (1988:38)*

Man grumbles,  
A beast bellows.

Removals, therefore, depress man and beast as we gather from these lines. These are deprived of their rich arable and pastoral lands to which they are used. Man depends to a large extent on crop and stock-farming for his subsistence and chooses to settle where conditions may be favourable. Removals, therefore, separate man and beast from their Canaan.

In the poem "*Morwala-dithoto*" (Loads-carrier), Lentsoane, through his persona, depicts one old Blackman who is weary of forced removals and, further, distinguishes between "*nageng-tšhweu*" (White-spot) and "*nageng-ntsho*" (Black-spot). This old African of Matuba regiment (i.e. a group that was circumcised together) reveals his discontent about forced removals in lines 14-23 of the first stanza of the same poem thus:

- 14    *Ba fetotše bowela-kalana bja ka maaka,*  
15    *Ba nkgalakišetša mobu woo mme a o komilego,*  
      *A o komilego ge ke mmeleka tetelong.*  
      *Ba nkgalakišetša mobu woo le nna ke o komilego,*  
      *Ke o komilego ge ke sa kgamathetše maše,*  
      *Ditšhomila di sa šitletše nko.*  
20    *Lehono ba re tšeo ka moka ke maaka,*  
      *Therešo ke yeo ba e bolelago.*  
      *Ba re naga-ntsho yela bjale ke naga-tšhweu,*

They turned the land of my birth into a fallacy,  
They embittered for me the soil which my mother  
swallowed,  
Which she swallowed while I made her sick during  
pregnancy.  
They embittered for me the soil which I also swallowed,  
Which I swallowed while I was still full of dry matter  
from my mouth,  
Mucous still blocked the nostrils.  
Today they are saying all that is a fallacy,  
The truth is what they are talking.  
They say that black-spot is now a white-spot,  
It has started to become ugly for a Black.

We deduce from the excerpt that the state formulates land laws for its own ends. All land that was Black by birth-right is incorporated into the so-called White-spot. Land is implied in these terms: "*bowela-kalana*" (where one's umbilical cord has fallen, i.e. the Blackman's land of birth) and in the repetition of "*mobu*" (soil) which the persona enjoyed from his time of birth. The frustration that the state has caused among Blacks by depriving them of their birth-right, i.e. the land on which they were born and bred from time immemorial becomes apparent in line 1 of the same excerpt. The poet intensifies this frustration among Africans by repeating the term: "*nkgalakišetša*

(embittered for me) which has a gustatory connotation in an attempt to reveal that the persona no longer enjoys his birth-right. The poet, further, amplifies and reinforces the unhappiness of Blacks in their land of birth that has been caused by discriminatory land laws through the use of contrasting terms: "*therešo*" (truth) as opposed to "*maaka*" (fallacy) in the excerpt above and in line 20 which reads: "*Ba re naga-ntsho yela bjale ke naga-tšhweu*" (They say that black-spot is now a white-spot). Poor Blacks felt demoralized since the state has deprived them of their land through its land laws. Africans were not allowed to be physically present on the land that was by the law owned by Whites, except only as employees.

When some state authorities realise that some Blacks prosper wherever they are settled, the state declares such an area a "White-spot" (*nageng-tšhweu*) and plans to remove them so that such an area can be earmarked for or incorporated into its particular project. These Blacks are removed to a "Black-spot" (*nageng-ntsho*). Lentsoane has substantiated the said ideas in lines 41-44 of the poet "*Morwala-dithoto*" (Loads-carrier) when he states:

*Ke mo re lesehleng*

*Re ponapona bokamasea.*

*Dithaba ke tšela re di šupa ka menwana,*

*Dinoka ke tšeo re di tshetšego leetong. (1981:34)*

Here we are in an arid place,

We are as naked as neonates.



Those are mountains at which we point fingers,

Those are rivers which we crossed on our journey.

The poet sounds despair among Blacks due to removals. The term "*leetong*" (on our journey) in the last line of the quote refers to trekking that has been precipitated by removal of Blacks from White-spots to Black-spot. The mountains and rivers that Blacks have crossed on their way to their destinations are reserves for natural vegetation and water that symbolise hope and prosperity. Now that Blacks are remote from such natural resources, we are not surprised that they are dumped in dry and dusty areas (*lesehleng*) that are barren and void of natural resources (*re ponapona bokamasea*) that are vital for life. It is in such areas - Black spots - that Africans should make a fresh start for a living. One can imagine the difficulties they had to face. The characteristics we have mentioned here are typical of Black-spots. In his attempt to put Black-spots in a spotlight, the poet advances their additional attributes in lines 45-49 of "*Morwala-dithoto*" (Loads-carrier) thus:

*Go tupa marole motseng-mofsa,*

*Go nkgā bodutu, tlala le manyami,*

*Go nkgā mathata le masetlapelo.*

*A kae mašemo mo?*

*A kae mafulo mo? (1981:34)*

It is dusty in the new village,

It smacks of solitude, hunger and sadness,

It smacks of problems and woes.

Where are ploughing-fields here?

Where are pastoral areas here?

It is evident in the text that Black-spots are fraught with grievances. The term "*motseng-mofsa*" (in a new village) in line 1 refers to settlement areas in Black-spots. The poet reveals there is nothing to enjoy in such areas. He illustrates this point by enumerating several problems that are perceived at Black-spots. As we have indicated before, the most crucial problems of Black-spots affect man and beast. Man and beast are inseparable in accordance with our African culture. Man depends largely on stock and crop-farming for which conditions are altogether unfavourable at Black-spots as the poet indicates in rhetorical questions in the last 2 lines of the text. A Blackman's life is indeed at stake at Black-spots that are not conducive to arable and pastoral purposes.

In the light of what we know about Black-spots, we have to briefly explain the so-called "White-spot". In accordance with the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936, and then the dawning of independent national and self-governing states in 1969, the state proclaimed towns, suburbs and their environs where there were factories and farms under White proprietary as "White-spots". These White-spots are mainly characterised by favourable conditions that are not prevalent in Black-spots as Lentsoane has highlighted. The remaining part of land that is arid, dusty, remote from towns or cities where there is no fertile land for arable and pastoral purposes was proclaimed the "Black-spot". For instance, if Africans might have chances of working, they could only serve as migratory labourers. They might be forced to commute long distances daily at very high fares or may be forced to leave

their families for a relatively long period of about a week or a month. These are some evil consequences of (forced) removals through which the state perpetrated oppression on Africans as we have deduced from the poetic works of Lentsoane.

We would like to conclude discussions on forced removals and their evil consequences by referring to the poem "*Khutšo e kae?*" (Where is peace?). In lines 6-9 of this verse, Lentsoane asserts:

*Le ge ke robetše nka se e bone,  
Gobane malao a ka ba ka no a tsenelela,  
Ba re ke robetše nageng-tšhweu,  
Ke swanetše go thothela nageng-ntsho. (1975:63)*

Even if I am dead, I may not see it (peace),  
Because my grave may be penetrated,  
And say I am buried in a White-spot,  
I ought to trek to a Black-spot.

The poet exposes the far-reaching effects of discrimination on the basis of land laws. Africans do not only feel discrimination on the surface of the earth, but it follows them down to their graves as the poet illustrates in the use of these euphemistic terms "*robetše*" (sleep, i.e. dead) and "*malao*" (bedding, i.e. grave). The speaker lacks confidence in the government of the day. He mistrusts it for its arrogance on the part of Blacks. In pursuance of its discriminatory objectives, the speaker feels the state may at its discretion

order exhumation of corpses of some Blacks from the White-spot to the Black-spot in its planning system. The poet does not expect spiritual peace after death because he lacks peace of mind during life on earth due to removals. However, the state has already repealed many of its land laws in an attempt to introduce land reforms that may be acceptable to all its citizens.

### 5.3 The Equality of People before God

H.M.L. Lentsoane introduces another protest theme to the reader that all men are equal before God despite all the inequalities on this earth that man, himself, has institutionalised. Mankind is by nature discriminatory. Socio-economic factors, race, colour, creed, sex, etc. influence man to discriminate against one another in many forms, inter alia: influx control, forced removals, reservations of jobs and recreational amenities, etc. Lentsoane is strongly opposed to discrimination in lines 1-4 of the first stanza in "*Se ba tshediše mahlo*" (Do not despise them) when he says:

*Bophelo ke a go šia,*

*O a makatša ruri.*

*O reng o na le tlhao?*

*O reng o godiša ka mo o gatelela? (1981:5)*

Life I am afraid of you,

You are embarrassing indeed.

Why are you discriminatory?

Why do you elevate on one hand and oppress on the other?

It is evident in the quote that life is fraught with imbalances. Through the use of words: "*tlhao*" (discrimination) and "*godiša*" (elevate) as opposed to "*gatelela*" (oppress) in rhetorical questions in lines 3 & 4, Lentsoane shows the inequality of life that man has created among mankind. He strongly condemns any form of discrimination as inhuman, un-Christian and un-Godly. Lentsoane illustrates the rift that exists as a result of discrimination as follows: He deliberately creates some working-class distinctions against whom some people discriminate in the above-mentioned poem. Groups that fall under this working-class are miners, newspaper vendors, road-workers, surrounding-cleaners, night-watchmen, coal-carriers, grave-diggers, corpse-carriers and funeral-undertakers, etc. who are mainly discriminated on the basis of their socio-economic status (1981:5-7). The poet makes the reader aware that these seemingly down-trodden people render an invaluable service to the nation. They are irreplaceable in the sense that very few or none can opt to substitute them if, for example, they may collectively abandon their services owing to all labour injustices.

Lentsoane, further, depicts the deplorable working conditions under which these labourers toil for earning a livelihood as follows: Some workers are exposed to all underground and surface hazards in mines, others are exposed to all extremes of weather, night-shifts, wear dirty and worn-out clothes, are exposed to stench at dumping-grounds, toilets and mortuaries while they earn meagre salaries.

It is in the light of the above-mentioned labour injustices that Lentsoane considers these labourers as "the hands of the nation". He, therefore, accords the labourers the status of heroes and calls to order anyone whose pride tempts oneself to pass some disparaging remarks about them in lines 8-10 of the sixth stanza of "*Se ba tshediše mahlo*" (Do not despise them) when he says:

*Hleng re sa ba goeletša?*

*Hleng re sa ba hlogohla?*

*Na o ka ba emela legato?* (1981:7)

Why do we still shout at them?

Why do we still provoke them?

Can you substitute them?

We gather from the extract that these labourers are ill-treated in many ways by either their employers or members of the public. The poet, then, sounds a warning to the persecutors of these labourers in the rhetorical questions in lines 1 & 2 where he uses these words: "*goeletša*" (shout at) and "*hlogohla*" (provoke). He explicitly states that some senseless people rejoice at hurting the feelings of the working-class Africans who are in most cases not artisans and perform duties that some members of the public usually frown at. Nonetheless, in the last rhetorical question, the poet states that these labourers are invaluable and irreplaceable. The poet successfully creates a situation which delineates discrimination through which he exposes the inequalities among men. We, therefore, align ourselves with the poet's trend of thinking in lines 1-4 of the second



stanza of "*Nkabe dilo di rekwa*" (If things were bought) when he says:

*Nkabe tlhompho e rekwa,*  
*Ke be ke tla rekela bafsa ba sokologa,*  
*Ke be ke tla rekela dikebeke tša phologa,*  
*Ke be ke tla e rekela baikgogomoši ba boela. (1981:8)*

If respect were bought,  
I would buy it for the young to repent,  
I would buy it for the criminals to be saved,  
I would buy it for the proud to recoil.

We understand from the extract that respect and lack of pride are two common qualities that would bring about harmony among people and so end any form of inequality. The same qualities are recommended to persecutors and labourers that we have already mentioned.

With regard to the protest theme on the equality of all people before God, Lentsoane illustrates with other instances that there are still some inequalities among men. For example, he exposes discrimination to which he is vehemently opposed in some countries. In the third stanza of "*Meepo* " (Mines), the poet points out unequal distribution of wealth among citizens of some countries which is based on race and colour when he says:



*Gauta, taamane le malahla,  
Tshipi, koporo le marela,  
Re di fata maleng a lefase,  
Re di gorogoša go šiišago,  
Re phela le tšona.  
Re a di emaemela, ra lapa,  
Ra feleletša ka go di kganyoga,  
Ra feleletša ka go di bogela di feta,  
Di lebile matsogong a bona. (1981:28-29)*

Gold, diamond and coal,  
Iron, copper and asbestos,  
We dig them from the bowels of the earth,  
We poke them out where it is frightening,  
We live with them,  
We go up and down for them, we become tired,  
We end up by envying them,  
We end up by looking at them while they pass,  
Going straight into their hands.

In the quote above, the persona protests against unequal distribution of wealth between the employer and the employee. On one hand Africans are merely workers, i.e. gatherers of wealth and that is symbolised in the list of minerals in lines 1 & 2. Much of the efforts and time of Africans are expended deep down the mines as the poet asserts in

line 3 thus: "*Re di fata maleng a lefase*" (We dig them from the bowels of the earth). On the other hand, White masters fully enjoy the benefits of mining without having to exert much effort. In lines 7-9 the poet emphasises that White masters are on the receiving end of the vast wealth while Africans earn nominal wages. Under the circumstances that the poet reveals, employers were still prejudiced because they considered the race and colour of their employees when they determined salaries in line with the state policy of discrimination. In many circles of work such disparities on salary scales have already been or are being done away with because the state has repealed such laws in an attempt to avoid the exploitation of Africans.

Lentsoane, further, elucidates that inequality exists among men on earth in the second stanza of "*Tloga mo monna!*" (Go away, man!) when he asserts:

*"Tloga mo monna!"*

*Ga se kgopelo ke taelo.*

*Ke tla ngaola kae moratha wo?*

*Sešeba sona ba no mphora*

*Eupša ditseka tšona di ile. (1981:29)*

"Go away, man!"

It is not a request but an instruction.

Where shall I eat this food?

With relish I am flattered

While money is gone.

The poet illustrates how the state applies its discriminatory laws whereby man discriminates against man on the basis of race and colour in the excerpt above. From the instruction "*Tloga mo monna!*" (Go away, man!) in line 1, the poet exposes the ill-treatment that Africans suffered in towns. Africans were only allowed to buy food and drinks but prohibited to sit, relax, eat and drink in restaurants, canteens and even in parks that were exclusively reserved for Whites and their pets. Africans were also prohibited to drink water and use toilets that were meant for Whites. In the last line which reads: "*Eupša ditseka tšona di ile*" (But money is gone), the poet registers the discontent of the Africans who feel their money is never rejected. Reservation of amenities on racial and colour bases does indeed make one sick, and that is why the poet opposes and appeals that such laws be scrapped from statutory books. Laws on reservation of amenities caused inequality that was followed by protest from Africans - hence their repeal today.

Lentsoane, further, points out the adverse effects of laws that reserve recreational amenities to people of one race and colour at the expense of Africans in the poem "*Botshwelamare*" (Toilet). Due to the fact that Africans were prohibited to use some facilities in towns where, for example, there was a toilet exclusively meant for them, it served as a recreational centre where all these evils occurred; the toilet served as a place where Africans relaxed and drank liquor, they smoked dagga and abused other drugs, and littering and sexual intercourse took place. The worst evil arose when Africans were arrested for public indecency (1981:31). In lines 7-10 of "*Botshwelamare*" (Toilet), Lentsoane appeals to municipalities or town councils to provide Africans with the same facilities that Whites enjoy when he says:

*Hle bagolo se re nyorolleng fela,*  
*Re thušeng ka madulo,*  
*Re ikettle bo theogele,*  
*Re swane le batho.* (1981:31)

Please, seniors do not only quench our thirst.  
Help us with accommodation,  
We may relax and enjoy it (liquor),  
We may look like people.

The poet demands equal rights in the extract above. Some people drink liquor during their leisure time and apart from amusement, beer satisfies their desire for it. In the first line of the excerpt that reads: "*Hle bagolo se re nyorolleng fela*" (Please, seniors do not only quench our thirst), we gather that the poet is not only satisfied with the freedom of purchasing liquor (which Blacks were prohibited to do) only, but he strongly demands recreational facilities in the form of "*madulo*" (accommodation) in line 2, e.g. canteens, bar-lounges, restaurants, etc. where Africans will enjoy drinking and spending their money. With the irony in the last line which reads: "*Re swane le batho*" (We may look like people), the poet protests against the inhumane treatment that Africans experience from their White counterparts in towns. He, further, states that Africans are by nature equal to other national groups and deserve equal opportunities and rights in the premise of recreation. The step whereby the state declared some recreational facilities multi-racial was a gradual attempt towards opening them to all racial groups like it is today. This last step has actually become the realisation of the aspirations of Africans in our

country which Lentsoane orchestrated.

What is strange to Lentsoane is that apart from man-to-man discrimination, even fate seems to discriminate against Africans in favour of Whites. He illustrates this point in the first stanza of "Meepo" (Mines) when he says:

*Lefase ge o swerwe ke tlala,*

*O metša rena,*

*Bona aowa.*

*Coalbrook o lle wa mpanapalega,*

*Bona wa no ba lebella.*

*Na o no bona rena fela?*

*Na go no tsefa rena fela?*

*Na bona ba a galaka?*

*Aretse!*

The earth if you are hungry,

You swallow us,

Them no.

Coalbrook you over-satisfied your hunger,

You simply looked at them.

Do you see us only?

Are we the only delicious ones?

Are they bitter?

Who knows!

Lentsoane is sceptical about some queer natural incidents that relate to the fate of Africans in the extract above. According to him, destiny seems to discriminate against and oppress Africans more than people of other nationalities. In line 1 of the excerpt, the poet has pointed out the hungry state of the earth which corresponds so well with its swallowing action in relation to Africans in line 2 in an attempt to effect its devastating effects. In lines 2 & 3 of the excerpt, the poet employs contrast thus: "*O metša rena*" (You swallow us) and "*Bona aowa*" (Them no) in an attempt to expose the discriminatory nature of natural events against Africans in favour of people of other nationalities. The same notion is intensified in lines 4 & 5 of the excerpt where the poet points out that in almost every mine disaster, e.g. the Coalbrook mine disaster, people of some nationalities survived or very few died while Africans died in large numbers. With the use of rhetorical questions in lines 6 & 7 of the text, the poet questions such queer natural events after which Africans mourn their dead, some of whom are "without a grave, unknell'd, uncoffin'd and unknown" in the words of L.G. Byron in his poem "*There is a Pleasure*" (Smyth & Swacina 1987:15). Lentsoane emphatically indicates his dismay about the discriminatory nature of such natural events that massacre Africans through rhetorical questions in lines 7 & 8 where he employs contrast in these terms: "*tsefa*" (delicious) against "*galaka*" (bitter). These terms bear a sense-impression of taste. Their implication is that fate distinguishes through its sense of taste that Africans are of its predilection and should, therefore, die in large numbers. As a result of such natural disasters, families of the deceased break up and clans and tribes decrease.



In some of his poems, viz. *Modimolle*, *Di a lla*, *Lena le ileng?* Lentsoane humbly appeals to gods to mediate for grace to God on behalf of Africans. To illustrate this point of view clearly we will cite lines 1-13 of the verse, "*Lena le ileng?*" (What is wrong with you?) where the poet says:

- 1     *Re itia ka tolwane,*  
       *Re re re adimeng diitsebe,*  
       *Rena mono re lla sa poo.*  
       *Bolelang le ba bagolo,*  
 5     *Ba re kweleng bohloko*  
       *Gobane ge e le koma re a bolla,*  
       *E gana go aloga,*  
       *Magala re tlapinya a mehweleretshipi,*  
       *Na le a re bona?*  
 10    *Na le a re kwa?*  
       *Na le a re rata?*  
       *Badimo bolelang le yena?*  
 13    *Mohlomongwe lena o tla le kwa.    (1981:21)*

We are kneeling down,  
 We are saying lend us your ears,  
 We here are lamenting.  
 Talk to great ones,  
 Let them sympathize with us

Because we are indeed at a circumcision school,  
It does not want to end up.  
Live coals we tread on those of iron-wood,  
Do you see us?  
Do you hear us?  
Do you love us?  
Gods, talk to him,  
Perhaps he may understand you.

The extract above reveals that Africans suffer because of some inequalities. In lines 1 & 2 the poet employs idioms through which he humbly appeals to some superhuman powers to listen attentively. Through the hyperbole in line 3 which reads: "*Rena mono re lla sa poo*" (We here are lamenting), the poet registers the grievances of Africans to which the superhuman beings are implored to listen. The poet has explicitly illustrated the magnitude of such grievances in lines 6-8. Such grievances are equated with "*koma*" (circumcision school) and "*magala*" (live coals especially of iron-wood) which have the effects of protracted and excruciating pain. It is due to the perception of such sense-impressions that the poet is embarrassed by the silence and connivance of the supernatural beings about the predicament in which their descendants are as he (the poet) expresses through rhetorical questions in lines 9-12. In the last two lines of the extract the poet implores the supernatural beings, viz. "*badimo*" (gods) to serve as mediators of these aggrieved Africans to an anonymous Supreme Being addressed in pronouns "*yena*" (him) and "*o*" (he) with the hope of resolving their seemingly unsurmountable grievances. It is along such lines that the poet, therefore, implores the

gods to stop conniving at the sufferings of their subjects while their attention and action might better their living conditions. In this way one feels the strife of Africans towards achievement of equality with their White counterparts may materialise.

In lines 43-49 of the verse "*Go tlo okobala neng?*" (When will it be better?) Lentsoane, who feels for Africans who are mentally and physically weary of the injustices of White supremacy, appeals to God to bring about true reforms which Africans desperately aspire for daily when he says:

*Ntshebele ihlo la mosegare*

*Gore re tla ba batho neng.*

*Ra sega le batho ka moka,*

*Ra dula le batho ka moka,*

*Re sa letile,*

*Re sa tla leta,*

*Re tla bona. (1981:36)*

Whisper into my ear (you) the eye of the day

As to when we shall be people,

Laugh with all people,

Stay with all people

We are still waiting,

We shall still wait,

We shall see.

A desperate need for equality as a consequence of imminent reforms that the state should initiate is felt among Africans in the extract above. Such a need for equality induces the poet to appeal even to celestial bodies, e.g. the sun that is in the centre of the solar system which he calls "*ihlo la mosegare*" (the eye of the day) in line 1. In view of some wonders on the creation of heavenly bodies in the universe, the poet perceives or imagines there is a superhuman being that controls nature. Perhaps such heavenly bodies are next to a superhuman being and they can reveal through whispering into his ears when such reforms are due to bring about equality. With the repetition of the word "*batho*" (people) in lines 2-4, the poet (who is an African) represents the African point of view that Africans feel inferior because they are rejected by their fellow-human beings, and perhaps gods and God. Their White counterparts do not afford them the human status (dignity) they deserve. In lines 5-7 the poet has echoed the feelings of Africans that reforms are overdue as they still aspire for and shall welcome equal opportunities and treatment. The trend of thinking of the poet is aligned with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

While Africans in other countries still expect true reforms that are acceptable to the majority of the people, the state stunts them with the so-called "quasi-reforms" or "cosmetic reforms". Such reforms cover, among others, marriages across racial and colour bar and the opening of multi-racial amenities. However, these are signs of the envisaged transitional stage during the transformation of the state policy of discrimination. In essence there are still some conservative individuals and their organisations that are still opposed to such unsatisfactory state reforms. Some liberal-minded Africans have very often suffered humiliations in the form of insults, assaults, confrontations, deaths, etc.

from individuals or groups of people against the state which never takes any action for public violence, obstruction of the course of justice and the violation of human rights. This is indicative of the fact that such states are also biased against Africans. In lines 1-4 of the verse "*Phori mahlong*" (Plastering over the cracks), Lentsoane is sceptical about the authenticity of such reforms and, further, stresses that it is enough to go on with them when he says:

*Go e tšhela le e tšhetše,  
Hleng bjale gona nke le tla re foufatša?  
Ke neng le theogetše batho ba batho  
Tema e le yeo e sa bonalego? (1981:33)*

To cheat you have cheated,  
Why does it now seem you are about to beblind us?  
For how long have yo started dear people  
While there is no proof of your deeds?

In the extract above, the poet expresses a feeling of discontent about the unauthenticity of state reforms. He echoes the feelings of Africans who are disgusted with untrue reforms and feel their patience is fast diminishing. The poet employs alliteration with "*tšh*" and "*tš*" in his choice words: "*tšhela*" (cheat), "*tšhetše*" (have cheated), "*foufatša*" (beblind) and "*theogetše*" (have been busy) coupled with irony in the repetition of the phrases "*batho ba batho*" (dear people) and "*le tla re foufatša*" (you are about to beblind us) in lines 2 & 3 in an attempt to reveal that all efforts of the state in introducing

reforms do not bear any fruits to Africans. In spite of such unauthentic reforms, Africans are still faced with injustices of discriminatory laws such as disparity of salary scales on the basis of race, colour and sex, living in overcrowded shanties or dilapidated houses, long-distance commuting, etc. in comparison with their white counterparts. When Africans exert more pressure on state authorities in demanding real reforms by organising rallies to address their grievances, holding peaceful mass demonstrations of discontent, submitting memoranda of grievances to authorities, etc. the consequences become too ghastly. State police and soldiers often shoot these Africans who strive for their rights while the state ignores the causes of such complaints. Lentsoane questions such actions of police and soldiers in the last stanza of "*A a falala*" (It is shedding - i.e. blood) when he says:

*A a falala,*  
*A falatšwa go dikonyana,*  
*A falatšwa gabohloko.*  
*A tšhologile kgalekgale,*  
*Ao a bego a swanetše go tšhologa,*  
*A tšhologela nna le wena.*  
*A wona a tšhologela eng? (1981:32)*

It is shedding,  
It is shed from lambs,  
It is shed bitterly  
It is shed long long ago,



That which was supposed to be shed,  
 It shed for you and I.  
 For what is this shed?

Murder has pervaded the extract above. With the repetition of the synonyms "*falala*" (shed) and "*tšhologa*" (shed) in their various forms or extensions, Lentsoane states that murder is the order of the day as police and soldiers beat and shoot "*dikonyana*" (lambs) - an image which refers to innocent people who strive for equality. The poet understands there is no reason why Africans should not sacrifice their lives for equality. In lines 4-6 he acknowledges that Jesus Christ was crucified very long ago for the salvation of mankind irrespective of race and colour. Through the rhetorical questions in the last line which reads: "*A wona a tšhologela eng?*" (For what is this shed?), Lentsoane outrightly condemns the murder of Africans who struggle for equal rights as an impropriety. He brings forth this idea with an intent to call to order all state authorities so that they should denounce all forms of discrimination for the sake of love, peace and prosperity.

In line with the above-mentioned views, in lines 63-72 of the verse "*Re bafeti*" (We are sojourners), Lentsoane elucidates the theme of equality when he says:

63     *Re bafeti re nkgā tsela*  
           *Fela re tla goroga mmogo,*  
 65     *Ra tsebana mohlāng wa ntshe,*  
           *Mohlāng therešo le boitsholo*  
           *Di tla ngalelago ba bangwe.*

- Re bafeti re tla gahlana*  
*Re gahlantšhwa ke yena.*  
 70 *Re ahlolwa ke yena,*  
*Yena wa go hloka tshele,*  
 72 *Yena wa go se hlathe magoro. (1988:41)*

We are sojourners with a long road ahead of us  
 But we shall arrive together,  
 We shall recognise one another on that day,  
 The day truth and regret  
 Will part with others.  
 We are sojourners and shall meet,  
 We shall be caused to meet by him,  
 We shall be judged by him  
 He who lacks complaint,  
 He who knows no class-distinctions.

The theme of equality among all people pervades the excerpt above. Lentsoane makes state authorities aware that everyone is mortal like their discriminatory institutions are temporary. With the repetition of the image "bafeti" (sojourners) which bears Biblical allusions in lines 1 & 6 coupled with the idiom "re nkgā tsela" (we have a long road ahead of us) in line 1, the poet has illustrated the impermanence of discrimination on earth which is usually terminated after death. The poet uses words like "gahlana" (will meet), "gahlantšhwa" (will be caused to meet) and "ahlolwa" (will be judged) in his attempt to

call for the intervention of superhuman powers so that some day all the people will have to face the wrath of God. On the same day of judgement (*mohlang wa ntshe*) people who once discriminated against one another will recognise one another. This notion proves the impermanence of man-made institutions and of man himself on earth. With the repetition of the pronoun "*yena*" (He or him) in which the poet uses end-rhyme in lines 7 & 8 and sentence-initial rhyme in lines 9 & 10, he (the poet) emphasises the fact that it is God alone who will indiscriminately pronounce judgement on mankind according to their worldly words and deeds so that everyone should shoulder the consequences thereof. The fact that all people irrespective of race, colour, creed or sex shall have to face judgement from God clearly indicates that all people are equal before Him. When the discriminatory laws of man fail, the law of God shall take its course to the disadvantage of those who will regret the consequences of their divisive laws. Lentsoane clearly illustrates the sinful nature and impermanence of discriminatory laws and their perpetrators on earth and, further, calls for the equality of all people before human laws as it is before divine laws. It is this equality of mankind that everyone should learn to live up to on this earth in order to avoid the wrath of God to which everyone shall be exposed on the day of judgement. Lentsoane elucidates the theme on the equality of all people before God through imagery which bear Biblical connotations and sense-impressions, and through the choice of words and idioms.

#### 5.4 **Résumé**

To conclude the discussion on protest themes, we have made references to some poems in an attempt to show how successful Lentsoane has been in treating them.

Lentsoane has made reference to some of the discriminatory laws that brought about inequalities at a particular point in time. His poetry is a protest against some discriminatory laws that appertain to influx control measures of Africans from rural to urban areas, separation of amenities in towns on the basis of colour and sex, removals of Africans in accordance with land laws, etc.

For instance, we learn from the poetry of Lentsoane that influx control legislations dehumanise people. It happened to some people who were given many nicknames because of their crooked tactics that were intended to eke out a livelihood. The poet, through the persona, appeals to state authorities to introduce true reforms that will accommodate everyone even Africans as human beings who should have equal rights with people of other racial groups.

Forced removals have also plagued Africans. In some poems, Lentsoane (through his persona) reveals that Africans are weary of removals from White-spots to Black-spots. He appeals to state authorities that Africans have had enough of removals in his utopian ideal. He yearns for an utopian life that is hopefully characterised by human love and equal rights among people. This ideal bears testimony to the extent of the sufferings of Blacks on this planet. The same ideal arouses a feeling of escape from real life that is full of frustrations into the world of fantasy (dream-land). By also pointing out the far-reaching effects of removals on Blacks on the surface of and beneath the soil, the poet appeals to the state to give Africans peace of mind as well as spiritual peace by transforming the discriminatory land laws. Fortunately, the state has already repealed many of such laws today in its transitional stage towards a non-racial democratic rule.

We have deduced from all the extracts of Lentsoane's poetry throughout this chapter that he is an advocate of equal rights and human freedom of movement, freedom of earning a livelihood decently by seeking employment everywhere, freedom to use all facilities wherein one spends one's money. At the same time, Lentsoane is a source of inspiration to his readership so that they should relentlessly strive for their equal rights.

Many of the discriminatory laws which had an impact on Lentsoane have already been scrapped from the statutory books of our country due to the resistance of Blacks. These poems serve as a background information on the historical development of Africans in this part of the sub-continent. Generations to come can still make reference to the poetry of Lentsoane if they wish to know and understand the effects of discriminatory legislations on their ancestors. The universal truth is that all men are equal before God.

## CHAPTER VI

### GENERAL CONCLUSION

This dissertation is not an exhaustive study of theme and expression in the poetry of H.M.L. Lentsoane. The dictates of this study have constrained us to discussion of its content (theme) and its medium of communication or vehicle (expression). To prospective students on the poetic writings of Lentsoane, we wish to say there is still a vast field of theme that needs to be explored.

In the study of theme, we understand that authors like any other person in everyday life perceive and react to a particular issue or situation in different ways. Themes that we have discussed in this dissertation reveal several issues or situations to which Lentsoane has reacted in his poetry. His poetic writings are an attempt to re-live the same issues or situations that he would like to share with his readers. Poetry is, therefore, a record of one's feelings or experiences of a particular situation at a particular point in time.

The experience of Lentsoane as a teacher and a lecturer at secondary and tertiary institutions has provided him with more themes for his poetic writings. As a history master, he was in a position to record in his poetry many important events of communal, national and international nature. As a lecturer of vernacular, he was also in a position to write on his experiences with students, teaching or lecturing staff, etc. We realise that Lentsoane had a vast field from which he drew his poetic material.



Our discussion of Lentsoane's poetry has shown that he is a social poet, a religious poet, a historical poet and a liberal poet in his perception of and reaction to issues or themes pertaining to the social, economic, religious and political life in his setting. As man progresses, he introduces reforms that keep pace with time in all spheres of human life. It also became apparent in the poetry of Lentsoane that he aspired to have people and their state introducing reforms in order to rectify the maladies of the past history.

As a social poet, Lentsoane criticises barriers or regulations against mutual love, inter-marriages and living-together on the basis of colour, ethnic and territorial aggrandisement. He opposes the regulation of marriage along traditional African views as well as discriminatory laws that promote tribal and racial purity and superiority. On the contrary, Lentsoane advocates intermarriages and meaningful co-existence on the basis of boundless love among all persons. He advocates reciprocation of love affairs between lovers or spouses. This practice is alien to the traditional African view of life. According to him, Africans should emulate people of European cultures. They should no longer view love affair as a secretive and shameful premise. Lovers should exchange words, actions and presents which signify love. With the passage of time, the state also repealed the laws that prohibited inter-marriages and free social interaction. Today the onus lies with the youths to propose love to and marry anyone across the barriers of colour, ethnicity, territorial aggrandisement, creed, etc.

The poet is opposed to the state of being unmarried - the increase in number of bachelors and spinsters as a result of the influences of the lifestyle of Western Civilisation. According to our African tradition, such people are viewed as undesirable

social deviants and their status is regarded as taboo. They are still unacceptable in accordance with today's lifestyle because they are causes of immorality regardless of whether their educational achievements enable them to play certain roles in society.

Lentsoane views the birth of a child into a family as of utmost importance and that it should be regarded as a gift from God irrespective of its legitimacy or vice versa. Each family that begets a child feels blessed. Married couples who have no children are never happy even though they may be blessed with some material wealth. It is, therefore, advisable for such couples to try by all means to procure one, through either medical means or adoption if normal birth fails. The need for a child in each family proves that its (the child's) value cannot be equated with any material treasure.

Our poet is very concerned with the way in which children are brought up. He has pointed out that the treatment of children varies in different families. It ranges from being negligent to being over-protective. What bothers Lentsoane is to see some parents neglecting or ill-treating their children. This has evoked within him feelings that children's status and rights are overlooked and violated. He, therefore, advocates for recognition and protection of children's status and rights so that they should be brought up into fully-fledged responsible adults.

Lentsoane is a radical opponent of birth control measures. He views contraception as a means of depriving a child of its life to which it has a right. Additionally, the poet emphasises the disadvantages of birth control measures. He, therefore, makes people aware of their dangers to the users themselves and their offsprings. The poet's view on

the use of contraceptive measures is more in line with that of many Africans, more especially when they first learned about contraception. Birth control measures sound alien to African culture.

The poet discourages divorce in view of its alarming proportions today and also the adverse effects thereof on spouses, their kins and kiths. The most crucial effects of divorce are usually more evident on children who usually experience the difficulties of single parenthood. Apart from its shattering effects on the size of the clan, divorce breeds immorality among adults and youngsters. He advocates reconciliation between divorced spouses in view of its evil consequences.

We draw a number of conclusions from the poetry of Lentsoane about the themes on women that we have discussed. Lentsoane, like other African authors, is on a campaign to re-direct the perspectives of Africans on their culture in counteracting the effects of colonialism. Colonialism engendered feelings of inferiority among Africans, particularly women. The cultural heritage, opinion, decisions, actions and words of Africans were not only despised by Europeans but by Africans themselves.

Lentsoane advocates *négritude* in the concept "Black Beauty". In it the poet expresses the feeling that all Blacks throughout the world should be made aware that their origin is Africa. The same concept is an effort to restore self-confidence and pride in diffident African women as regards their natural ebony skins. Their diffidence has been apparent in their mode of attire as they wear wigs, hot-pants and bell-bottomed trousers, the use of make-ups, cosmetics and red lipsticks. Such women seem alien to their African culture

because they look masculine and also expose their better parts by wearing such attire which does not cover or delineates them. He advises young women of today that they should wear simple feminine attire, be original but presentable in appearance and should aspire to preserve facts and artefacts of African culture of which they should be proud. As Marcus Garvey said America for the Americans, Dr Kwame Nkrumah also asserted Africa for the Africans. African women should, therefore, feel confident before the eyes of their male counterparts. The poetry of Lentsoane on this theme is intended to revive self-awareness and self-identity among Africans.

The place of the woman is in the kitchen. When it comes to the role of the woman, the African culture is in line with the said expression. The activities of African women are confined to household or family chores, e.g. collecting fire-wood, fetching water, tilling the soil, weeding, harvesting, cleaning, etc. The activities of women as regards communal and social responsibilities were unheard of. With the advent of Western Civilisation, the difficulties of African women have become complex and their solution is no longer sought within the family context. The lot of modern African women as breadwinners today forces them to seek the means of earning a livelihood outside the home. It is in accordance with this view that women started participating in communal and social activities. As regards social responsibilities, Lentsoane has composed some poems in which he depicts African women who work hard to bring up children who will eventually assume positions of leadership in their societies. In addition to this, African women are busy with community development or nation building through self-help projects, e.g. vegetable gardens, poultry-farming, pig-farming, etc. which are spearheaded by women's organisations. In this way, women are involved in production of food for sustenance and

commercial purposes. They are, therefore, actively involved in campaigns against illiteracy, malnutrition, hunger, diseases, etc. Women are, therefore, successful in their social activities. Lentsoane favours the participation of women in social activities.

The poet advocates parity between men and women. He cites examples of modern African women who strive for parity with their male counterparts in many spheres of life. On the basis of their success in professional and social activities, African women demand parity with their male counterparts through their organisations which serve as liberation movements. Since they compete men in academic and professional qualifications, they strive for equal positions of leadership in all spheres of life. Young women of today should take examples of those women-leaders that Lentsoane cited in his poetry. Such women-leaders serve as a source of inspiration to African women who should relentlessly strive for the parity for which they aspire in order to bring up back-logs in their lifestyle. Lentsoane, therefore, favours equality among people regardless of sex. He is not a sexist.

Our poet detests the devious behaviour of some African women. He slanders at their deviation in these forms: child-neglect, abuse of intoxicating drinks, smoking, committing abortion, etc. By creating a contrast between women-leaders and those that are breadwinners on one hand and the devious women on the other, the poet wishes the latter group to emulate the former. Through deductions from this comparison, the readers of Lentsoane's poetry are inspired to improve their standard of living. This step will definitely assist youths of today to guard against lapsing into activities of such devious women.



The advent of Western Civilisation with its capitalistic ideology has given rise to a lot of social problems that were unheard of under African Socialism or Black Communalism in Africa. The capitalistic principles of a "free enterprise society" have brought about two class distinctions among the workers, viz. the rich middle class and the poor workers. Since the second group comprises the majority of citizens, they become involved in numerous criminal activities in dire need of money - hence the theme "*Money is the source of evil*".

Lentsoane equates money to cattle through imagery in his poetry. The intention of the poet as regards this analogy is to illustrate the great intensity of the love and need for money among all people as it were with cattle among Africans. This proves why money is associated with all forms of evil that modern societies experience, e.g. fraud, murder, theft, robbery, assault, etc. Such evils militate against the spirit of a meaningful life. The poet, like every normal member of the community, detests such numerous criminal offences that are attributable to the need for money. By citing examples of fraud in the management of financial institutions, the poet suggests the need for trustworthy trustees, directors and managers so as to avoid insolvency. He also suggests that money should facilitate life and good human relationships in homes rather than break families and estrange relationships. In combating such criminal offences, the state should not only employ the services of police. The state and communities should collaborate in providing youths with vocational education that is necessary for the acquisition of labour skills and provision of job opportunities that give satisfaction. In this way, evils that are related to money will be minimised.



As a responsible adult member of the community, Lentsoane abhors juvenile delinquency in whatever form it takes. This negative feeling is apparent in his poetry where he slanders at the disgraceful criminal tendencies of juveniles such as abuse of dagga, drugs and intoxicating drinks, truancy, murder, gambling, pre-mature and pre-marital sexual relations and pregnancies in which they become involved during their free leisure time. Good use of leisure time activities among youths minimises the high incidences of juvenile delinquency and also develops a healthy body that accommodates a sound mind. Apart from proper use of leisure time and activities, communities should invite professionals in various educational and vocational fields to address and guide youths. Youths should not be left to themselves otherwise they will lapse into delinquency.

Lentsoane has also shown concern with the alarming abuse of intoxicating drinks among adults and youths. He condemns the abusers of intoxicating drinks because these drinks are detrimental to their health, status, property and future. Abusers' drinking habits defeat the purpose for which beer is brewed, e.g. drinking for amusement at social gatherings and its use during certain rites and rituals among Africans. Abusers of intoxicating drinks have social problems from which they wish to escape into the world of fantasy. He has revealed many disadvantages of abusing intoxicating drinks such as death, injury, hang-over, exhaustion of money, clashes between students and teachers, and employers and employees, etc. in order to make his readers aware of their dangers so that they should resort to teetotalism or social drinking habits of traditional African leaders, e.g. nobles, medicinemen and kings. Youths and adults should emulate such examples.

Our poet is also aware that school discipline, which is a controversial issue today, needs a lot of attention. As a teacher, he has advised his colleagues that discipline at school should not only be based on corporal punishment. He has drawn the attention of teachers to various alternative means of disciplining pupils such as warnings, admonitions, rebukes, etc. in avoiding lax discipline. Such means of discipline coupled with insistence on hardwork will help teachers keep good discipline against which only a few insensible pupils will ever rebel. The poet, further, calls for respect of the child and its status. Adult members of the community should accommodate the views of the child who demands to be listened to. The state and communities should take drastic steps against any form of child-abuse.

The poet is totally opposed to abuse of children. Among all forms of child-abuse, the poet has sounded a warning against sexual abuse of children by some adults. Sexual abuse of children is a primitive action peculiar to the Middle Ages - the period during which a child was regarded as a miniature adult. Unfortunately youths of today prefer close association with some adults for material gains at the expense of their health and future. The poet recommends to all youths that education (book-learning) is the best means of preparing oneself for adult-life into which they prematurely rush. He advises the youths that education enriches one's mind and nourishes one's body. Once one is educated, one can easily resist adverse influences.

Lentsoane has also treated some protest themes in his poetry. Such themes on protest embrace controversial issues that some citizens of a particular state do not feel at ease with. The laws of such states make life uncomfortable to that particular section of its

people. Blacks in South Africa never welcomed legislations on influx control from rural to urban areas and removals on the basis of land laws which had unbearable consequences.

The poet is totally against the influx control laws that state authorities applied against Africans in towns. He reveals their evil consequences on African job-seekers. These laws also created a society that is characterised by inequalities, discontent, criminal behaviour, civil commotion, etc.

Our poet is wholeheartedly opposed to Group Areas Act in accordance with which the state removed and re-settled people. He feels such laws were discriminatory and caused Africans many inconveniences.

Lentsoane, through his persona, appeals to state authorities to repeal influx control laws and Group Areas Act so that there should be equality among people as they are equal before God. It is on the basis of these themes on protest that Lentsoane is regarded as a historical and a liberal poet.

We have observed from his poetry on protest themes that our poet is fully aware that the spiritual aspect of a person should be nurtured. His poetry contains themes that are drawn from religion. This emanates from his membership to a particular religious doctrine - Christianity and its preaching (as a full preacher). In his poetry that pertains to religion, Lentsoane does not criticise or condemn either religion between Christianity and traditional African worship (propitiation of gods) and their Supreme Beings.

As regards expression, the poetry of Lentsoane is rich with proverbs, idiomatic expressions, maxims and figures of speech of Northern Sotho language. These reveal the rich vocabulary and unlimited range of expression and profound statements. When some authors have a knowledge of the second and foreign languages in addition to their native one, it is often said such languages are an inhibiting factor in speech and writing. This is not the case with Lentsoane who studied Setswana and Southern Sotho at school and also lived in a multi-lingual environment of the metropolis. Such languages have no traces of interference with his vernacular in the expressions of his poetic writings. When one identifies with one's language, it is a sign of pride in one's cultural group and its cultural heritage. The same applies to Lentsoane.

Lentsoane has covered a wide field of themes in his poetry which is a cultural heritage that he has preserved for posterity. To all his future students, we wish to say this dissertation is a mere contribution in the discussion of theme and expression. There is still a lot of themes, expression, form, style, etc. that still need attention for future studies. No doubt, all future students of Lentsoane will find his poetic writings as a source of inspiration.

As regards theme in the traditional phase of Northern Sotho poetry, the poet has not made any remarkable contribution. He has made a laudable contribution towards theme in the transitional and modern phases. The vast majority of his poems are modern in character regarding theme which is unfolded in the rich vocabulary of the poet.

Authors (poets) are a vital part of any community. They usually give forth meaning and direction to the national aspirations of the people. If they divorce themselves from live issues of the day and what affects their people most, then the authors and the community have lost direction. Authors who shun such vital current issues are usually deemed irrelevant by their readership. In our case Lentsoane has adhered to this important aspect in his poetry. His poetry touches on current live issues of his time.

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